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A MIXED BASKET

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THE GENTLE ART:
SOME SKETCHES AND STUDIES.

The Salmon and Trout Magazine, referring to *The Gentle Art*, said :—"Mr. Lamond has a pretty trick of the pen; he writes clearly and, what is even more commendable, in good English. The book deserves an honoured place on every angler's bookshelf, and we venture to reiterate the hope that it will not be the last that we shall see by the same author."

The Glasgow Herald said :—"We cannot indeed believe that anyone who has any literary sense at all can read these articles without appreciating the powers of observation and the feeling for nature which they disclose and the literary charm with which they are expressed."

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A HIGHLAND BURN.

A MIXED BASKET

BY

HENRY LAMOND

SECRETARY OF THE LOCH LOMOND ANGLING
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

With Illustrations by the Author

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To
MY MOTHER

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PREFATORY NOTE.

I HAVE to thank *The Glasgow Herald* for courteously permitting me to republish in book form the following sketches which, more or less in their present shape, have from time to time appeared as special articles in the columns of that journal.

It should be stated that the *motif* of the first chapter, "The Point of View," was furnished by my friend, Mr. W. Adamson Foulis.

The kindly reception given to a former similar work has encouraged me to compile this second volume, which (perhaps I should however add) does not pretend to be informative.

H. L.

GLASGOW, *March, 1914.*

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THE UPPER CLYDE.

I.

THERE's them in toons that likes tae hear
The hammers clang an' clank
(The silly loons; what though the gear
Gaes clinkin' tae the Bank!);
But them that kens the Upper Ward
Has music mair tae mind—
The music o' the ripplin' ford,
The singin' o' the wind.

II.

There's them enjoys in ilka street
The traffic's busy hum;
The scliffin' sound o' passin' feet
Is melody tae some.
But them that kens Clyde nichts in June
Thinks a' sic clatter mars
The music o' the risin' moon,
The singin' o' the stars.

III.

The lark may sing a bonnie sang
Tae greet the mornin' sun;
The woods may ring baith loud and lang
Wi' blackies' cheerfu' din:
But them that kens the glintin' Clyde
Kens ither sangs as weel—
The music o' the waterside,
The singin' o' the reel.

A MIXED BASKET.

CHAPTER I.

THE POINT OF VIEW.

THERE is more in angling than the catching of fish, just as (I suppose) there is more in the making of omelets than the breaking of eggs.

Anglers, of course, know this, but other people are not easily convinced of the fact, and it must, therefore, be a somewhat difficult task to prove to the scoffer how interest can follow interest throughout the length of a day until the end of it comes in sight long before it seems to have well begun. Yet with the angler this is a common experience. The glamour cast upon him begins in the morning, when he slings creel on shoulder and takes rod in hand, and at once he is away from the commonplace things of life, so far away that no mere system of

mileage can estimate the distance. It is, I fancy, the glamour of expectancy that transforms his outlook.

Every time the angler sets forth upon an outing he feels that he is bound upon a fresh adventure, for he is one of those fortunate beings for whom the railway is ever the high road to romance. Indeed, it is hardly a figure of speech to say that in the train he is like a schoolboy; his sense of immediate irresponsibility has scattered to the winds the cares and worries of business; his spirits are strangely elated, and his mental outlook is pleasurably disturbed by an unexpected feeling of excitement. Why? The angler himself can hardly explain, and, in truth, I fancy the feeling is hardly explicable.

The prospects of the day at any rate obsess his mind. Will the water be right? And the wind—will it hold steady and soft in the sou'-west, or harden into a gale? Is he at last going to have a really great day, of the sort one dreams about and lives through perhaps once in a lifetime? And if by phenomenal luck, or unusual skill, he gets hold at last of that Great Fish, will his cast——? His mind balks at the thought of disaster. But is his outfit right? I have seen a sedate and elderly stockbroker—admittedly a somewhat rare bird—on his way to Loch Ard, going three separate times

through his tackle to make sure that nothing vital had been forgotten. Whatever, in the day ahead of him, the angler expects to happen, he may count alone upon this, that in its incidents it will differ from all other days formerly experienced.

As to these, it is curious how, looking back over one's experiences, incidents totally irrelevant to the business in hand stand out in memory. The bark of an otter beyond the willows; the discovery of a wild duck's nest; the futile chasing of an unusually gaudy dragon-fly among the reeds; these things, trivial enough in themselves, come back with an odd persistency; and the bad days, the day when you sat glum and disconsolate under the lee of a rock while cloud upon cloud of spindrift swept from the loch, and that other spring day when the line froze to the rod and fingers already chill became numb with the fumbling at it, even these acquire a mellowness which ranks them with the pleasanter memories.

After all, there was the comfort of the little fishing inn while the gale whooped without and the peat ashes swirled in the grate in miniature dust storms. Were tales not told amid wreathing tobacco smoke, and was there not perchance a dram? There had even been a charm in the trudge down the glen with the swing of a well-filled bag against one's

side, and a kind of music too (it seemed) in the "squish, squish" of sodden boots.

One incident in particular sticks in my mind by reason of its strangeness. We were loch-fishing once when a tern appeared from nowhere and began dipping at our flies as they were playing in the water. At first we twitched them away, fearful of hurting the bird, and tried the effect of shouts and gesticulations. But that tern had no proper appreciation of bad language, and continued his attentions till in despair we decided to let him have his will. He swooped, lifted the tail fly of one rod some twenty feet in air, dropped it, then swooped to the next cast; and would he desist? Not he. All this was most annoying, as fish were coming really well, but the tern for his part enjoyed the fun. At last we did a mean thing. Another boat was fishing some few hundred yards away, so we took our lines inboard and lit our pipes. The tern hovered overhead for some minutes, and then, to our relief, transferred his attentions to our neighbours, when, pulling round a point, we saw the bird no more. Incidentally also we had two salmon on board.

Gillies and boatmen, too, are a source of interest and reminiscence. Their life and occupation tend to develop their characters in diverse ways, so that many of them are men of curiously marked in-

dividuality. One characteristic they nearly all have in common, however, and that is an acute faculty of observation. While you enjoy drawing out your boatman, and listening to his pawky comments on men and things, you may be sure that he, too, is observing you and sizing you up at least as keenly as you are him. The best of them will not only keep the angler keen and alert when things are going well, but will keep him entertained when they are not, and very often their stories are little masterpieces of observation and humour.

They are, of course, most shocking autocrats. The angler requires to be possessed of unusual nerve, or he must exercise the subtlest diplomacy, ere venturing to try a fly of which the gillie has expressed disapproval. If by any chance the fly is successful—as even the most unlikely fly now and then may be—it is darkly hinted to be an extraordinary occurrence, that fish are behaving strangely, or else that the angler (poor fisher as he plainly is) is blessed with exceptional luck. Or a grim silence may convey rebuke enough.

But men of this kind are not commonly met with. The average boatman, or the average gillie, enters into the angler's success with equal jubilation, and mourns the non-success of the day almost more keenly than does his patron. Very often, if fish

are coming well, he will volunteer to prolong the day as long as daylight serves, and at last will make for "home" with obvious regret. But he is the very prince of gillies who will do this of his own motive when the day has been one of disappointment and, perhaps, disaster. The keen angler encounters such a gillie more often than the dilettante. A listless fisher exercises a dispiriting influence on his man, who sinks (and who will blame him?) into a morose silence, and a day that might yet have been a "day" lingers to the end a drab failure.

Of course there are hopeless days, days of driving wind and lashing rain, when there is nothing for it but to take shelter, thankful if we can snatch a few casts between the squalls. Then it is that the angler's philosophy is brought to the test, and he will discover if he really be an angler or no. If he grumbles at his ill luck as at a tragedy, then a tragedy it is, but if he can rise to look upon adverse circumstances and the perversity of fortune as an adventure, then there is chance of interest and amusement—aye, until rain and wind are alike forgotten.

After all, the angler, unless he be ill guided, is well clad and protected against cold and wet. Physical discomfort is or ought to be but slight, and only becomes a real trial to those who by

brooding make it so. Therefore, be intelligently interesting if you can, and jocular if you may, and time and discomfort alike will pass with unexpected speed.

If these notes are of service to any beginner in the great art, then the space devoted to them has not been wasted nor this good printer's ink spilled in vain. Patience is but one necessary quality of the well-equipped angler, but there will be the less need for its exercise by those who from the first succeed in acquiring the right point of view.

CHAPTER II.

I TO THE HILLS.

If there is any one time rather than another when your dour and sententious Scot will permit himself the luxury of a partial disclosure (to a wondering world) of the exuberance of spirit which wells within him, it surely must be when, creel on shoulder and rod in hand, he sets forth of an April morning to have a cast in his favourite stream.

Should you in your morning stroll encounter any such ere he turns off at the cross-roads, you may mark the glint in his eye, the flush born of expectation on his cheek, and, if he be not puffing lustily at his pipe (as the odds are that he is), he will doubtless be whistling a tune to himself for very joyousness of heart. You will wonder at his exultation—that is, if you are not an angler—but if you too are of the elect, you will be right in your assumption that here is the manifestation of "a first outing" of the year. You; or he; or I; what matter! Over us all alike at times comes this glamour of the spring.

There can be little doubt, I fancy, that the angler, beyond all men, gets close to the heart of Nature. It is essential to his sport, or rather, to his successful pursuit of it, that he has some understanding of the why and the wherefore of the elemental forces, the sun, the rain, the wind; and the greater his understanding surely the greater is his appreciation. I have at times been struck by the frank admiration expressed by a gillie of some bold arrangement of the scenery of cloudland and no less so by his recognition of some subtle note of colour barely hinted at amongst the birches.

Autumn gales or summer heat, the dry east winds of spring, or the clattering hail shower have each their significance to the angler, and, I think, if the truth be told, he less than other men grumbles at the variability of our climate. If at any time fish be reluctant, and the rod perforce lies idle, is he not free of the commonwealth of the woods and has he not understanding with a thousand unconsidered winged and creeping things, many of immediate pertinency to his art, and all of interest if only for the antic seriousness with which they go about their business? One feels a glow of sympathy with the obvious delight of animate things in the growing intensity of the April sunshine.

I suppose it has been rather an uplift of the spirit

than any well-founded expectation of better sport that has directed my steps thus along the hill road in preference to the turnpike which winds along the valley below. Looking back—for one always looks back to see the last of the valley—there is pleasantness enough in the prospect to make one pause awhile even if the regaining of one's breath after that last ascent were no consideration.

Grey overhead though the day still is, the southern sky has opened into lakes and seas of blue, and a belt of shining white clouds scattered above the range of distant hills intensifies the crests to a deeper blue beneath. The great basin of the valley, bare yet of foliage, is chequered with the rich brown of ploughed land and the broad green stretches of pasture, and through the midst winds each its own way, in sinuous curves, road, river, and rail.

Viewing it thus from a height, one recognises the uncompromising austerity of a Scottish village grouped round its market square. There is little of the conventional "picturesque" about its wind-swept cobbled streets and rain-washed slated roofs; but "character" doubtless lies in the modern parish church and the dark old huddled ruin of its Romish predecessor, and an artist might find inspiration in the facets of light from sunlit roof and window

which flash through the smoke ascending from morning fires. Something of interest, too, the pencil might discover in the contrast between the mansion house lying open to the road beyond its trim lawns and shrubberies and that crumbling heap of stones (for the eye has ranged to the immediate foreground) which still crowns the knoll in front of me, once the key of this pass through the hills. I light my pipe again and pursue my upward way.

Although every garden in the village below holds its primroses and wallflowers in full bloom, there is little evidence of approaching summer here yet in the dry tussocky grass by the roadside and the mouldering tufts of fern by the burn. The nibbled turnips scattered over the fields where the lambs are frisking comically beside their shaggy-coated mothers suggest a barrenness of the hill-country for yet awhile. Passing through the col and opening out the moorland country beyond, one sees the smoke still drifting above the black patches of burnt heather, and, by way of cold contrast, a patch of snow in a cleft above the thousand-foot line. Not much attraction in these miles of wintry moorland (one would suppose) for the "holdings" of a race however gallant. The sun is genial enough now, but those hand-fed sheep, and these posts erected beside the road to guide the unhappy wayfarer

through the wintry drifts, argue a tyranny more inexorable than man's.

The note of a curlew—no, the musical warning of an approaching motor car—interrupts the train of ideas. It flickers past in its bravery of brass-work as I step aside. Youth at the wheel and beauty as its complement; mated, or mating, they make a pretty picture in the little "two-seater" of American build. Even up here among the hills interminable human problems follow one. Were such "manufactured articles" to be discouraged by a heavy tariff, would that young man now be touring in such obviously congenial company? Would the British maker rise to the occasion were the incentive to effort to be removed? And would the revenue benefit hugely? One wishes that the politicians could really tell us; but at the moment I have no leisure to puzzle over the matter, for the stream, my objective, is now at hand, and the immediate question is the state of the water.

I have in fact descended into a transverse valley whose living waters are famous for the lusty trout they hold. It is early enough, perhaps, to look for a "basket," but yesterday's rain followed by to-day's sunshine may induce some of them to rise to the fly, and, indeed, the water is in fine order, running amber over the shingle and foaming yellow

as it churns amongst the boulders. I lose no time in putting my rod together at the bridge, and in a few minutes later, with supreme satisfaction, I raise and hook the first trout of the season. He is but a little thing, however, and his unavailing efforts at escape have so far exhausted his energy that when (having unhooked him) I stoop to let him swim where he will, he lies against the curve of my fingers as if loth to leave their shelter. But off he goes at last to live and fight (perhaps) another day. I have better hopes of the deep still pool below the sheep-fank, and, sure enough, ere, fishing up, I reach the entering run, a hungry half-pounder dashes at one of the droppers, woodcock and scarlet.

Here is ample reward for the morning's trudge. Up into the current he dashes, the rod bending and the reel skirling, and down he comes, compelled by the insistent strain, but boring behind the boulders as he comes. Anon he flashes to the other side as I lead him down, but at last he comes to the surface with a final splutter as, head out of water, I draw him shorewards. A pleasant combat, for one of us at least, but not him that lies in the bravery of his speckled golden coat on the grass at my feet. With half a dozen such to bear with me over the hill road I cannot count this April day ill spent.

Not much of angling in all this, you may say;

but if there were no more in angling than angling, I fancy that but few of us would angle. It is to my mind a sport the beauty of which depends in less degree than any other upon the skill of the performer or the net proceeds of the performance. Such attractiveness as it may otherwise possess I have, but faintly I fear, endeavoured to suggest.

CHAPTER III.

CONVALESCENCE.

"The Angler in Bed" is a chapter one does not expect to chance upon in any of the best hundred angling books, and I offer the idea freely as a theme brimful of human—even tragically human—interest for adequate treatment by the literary elect. Meantime, I can only put it on record that not till the borrowing days in the year of ill omen, '13, did I begin to sit up and take nourishment. In other words, I was able to assimilate current angling literature. Early in April I felt strong enough to attack those numbers of *The Field* and *The Fishing Gazette* which had been accumulating, and under the genial treatment of Doctors Sheringham and Marston recovery seemed possible—it was, in fact, assured. I could at length peruse, almost with the enthusiasm of Mr. J. Arthur Hutton, the not infrequent accounts of salmon captured in the Wye.

It was during the silent watches of the night, however, that my passive existence weighed most heavily. To count sheep jumping through a gap in a fence may wean some to somnolence; to

visualise enviously the feats of angling friends scattered throughout broad Scotland to me meant nightmare, and I would often wake to surprise myself weeping with very vexation in my sleep.

Yet such wandering thoughts would at times take a more practical turn and in the mind's eye, Horatio, a certain rod-rack (of which the designer and engineer is not unpardonably proud, though he should—or, rather, should not—say it himself) stood fair to view. From this rod-rack I would, in fancy, take down rod after rod, of an unconscionable number, for critical inspection. Having exhausted the "points" of rod number one and gloomily weighed its defects with reference to its unwritten but well-remembered record on loch and stream, rod number two would, in turn, be taken from its case, mounted. and duly criticised in the cold, clear light of an impersonal detachment. So with the rest.

The practical result, as often as not, would be, next day, a hasty letter to the rod-maker suggesting some nebulous scheme of improvement whereof the result would be awaited in feverish expectancy. In this way a cheap cane-built deep-sea fishing rod in two stubborn pieces (secured at a sale) acquired a third joint made of greenheart, in the hope that with such a top a serviceable trolling rod might be the outcome. In this way, too, a perfect little

thirteen-foot greenheart sea-trout rod by an Edinburgh artist grew to be thirteen feet six inches long by the substitution of a new centre piece and top for corresponding joints that in healthier days had been satisfactory enough.

I mention these instances of aberration mainly because they were, of many, the first to be tested in practice. For even bed must be abandoned at last; and to leave one's invalid couch for good demands more concentrated determination than your obstrusively healthy man may think. It may be conceived how the hesitating spirits of a convalescent would respond to the profusion of nature lavished along the shores of the greatest of Scottish lakes. For thither they hurried me, bag and baggage, scrip and scrippage, with the strictest injunctions against fishing.

In default of the more serious avocation, however, something each day might be attempted, something done, to earn a night's repose. There was no express prohibition, for example, against raking a fresh deposit of gravel on the walks; against trimming the flower beds, against constructing curious rockeries of roots and "chuckie stanes"; against filling the interstices with dainty hart's tongue ferns; against clipping the boxwood edges. Not a word had been said against any of these

things, and so they came to be done, and increasing strength followed the doing of them. Nor had any veto been placed upon the painting of gates and railings, and so the rather drab front gate brightened into emerald, and the little side iron wicket was picked out in white, and as the porch by contrast seemed to become sullen with envy, it too blossomed into emerald with panellings of cream. The fame of it got abroad, and old lady neighbours made an evening's pilgrimage to see and marvel, and all the villagers began surreptitiously to buy green paint from Jones the joiner. They did not consider white to be economical.

And so in much less time than the Faculty would doubtless have permitted, I prepared to charter boat and man for a day on the loch.

But I have not told how the split-cane sea rod, supplemented with its greenheart top, came to be unpacked in an ecstasy of expectation or how it proved to be the stiffest trolling rod in the world; or how the converted sea-trout rod appeared in its extended form and how it proved an admirable weapon. Anglers will remember how they first cut the strings that bound securely their latest purchase, and the feelings with which they first drew joint by joint from its case, the shapely companion (perchance) of many days.

It was a joy at last to be afloat, to cover the well-known route to the early salmon ground, trolling a Devon spinner the while. Here one looks for trout with the daffodils, salmon with the primroses, sea-trout and grilse with the last of the hawthorn, and all the bonnie banks by the water foot were gay with primrose beds, but hardly yet were the woods splashed with the drifts of the blossom of May. By the Burn Mouth, by the Back o' the Ross, by The Straits lay our course, and the wind whistled over the larches, and the morning sun sparkled on a fisherman's wave, and the thrushes piped cheerily to each other in Camstraddan Bay.

"I'm thinkin' there's a troot on your minnow," quoth the companion of days good and bad. But little appearance of the fact characterised the ex-sea rod. However, the faintest of twitches at the stubborn tip made inspection worth while, and sure enough a trout it was—how long it had been a trout there was no means of knowing—but it was duly rescued from a lingering death by suffocation and (being but small) consigned to the deep as a votive offering to the gods. "Pit the useless trash in the bows," quoth once more our mentor, referring to the ex-sea rod, "we'll awa' tae Darroch—yonder's M'Gibbon comin'—and we'll hae the first o' the drift the day, onyway."

The first of the drift, on a man's day, a fisherman's day, a salmon day, is strong meat for a convalescent; yet was it not too strong, nor was it, happily, detrimental that the converted sea-trout rod rose its first salmon, hooked its first salmon and landed its first salmon—a goodly fish of eleven and a half pounds—with a "wrist" like a dêbutante's ankle and a corporation like a bailie's. Needless to tell of the thrill of the strike, the anxiety of the rush to windward, the breathlessness with which the stroke of the deadly gaff was awaited. These things be trite to anglers—if not to convalescents.

Yet no longer might one claim to be a convalescent; killing salmon by casting a fly is a strong man's game. The last of the pills had been discreetly sown amongst the gravel, and the pill boxes now held sundry swivels; that confounded box of powders (whereof the remainder mysteriously disappeared) made, I found, a useful storehouse for eyed flies; and the tabloid bottles were the very thing for split shot.

There was a thick woollen comforter which declined to get "lost," however, and for quite a long time I was unable to make away with the rubber hot-water bottle.

CHAPTER IV.

A HIGHLAND BURN.

The Scot who is better acquainted with the "haars" of the North Sea than with the "bit shooers" of the Atlantic Ocean will hardly recognise the locality of the burn. We of the West know it well. Those (less fortunate) who, being no Scots, know not Scotland at all, may take it that the scene in fact is as fair as any that fancy can picture. Nor do the natives (if anglers also) grumble over much at an excessive rainfall. Some of them even, scattered abroad, may dream in day-dreams of the burn in spate.

If you penetrate by sea to the head of the great fjord—as the Norsemen did in the olden days—and the tide be full, you may, if observant, chance to see the burn as it issues covertly amid bramble and rush and sea-pink through the belt of white sand, strewn with blackened wrack and driftwood, which marks the height of winter storms. But if the tide be out, you may recognise the burn for what it is only by some otherwise unaccountable

pools and glistening patches of damp sand, whence of a morning the omniscient gulls hasten to join the flock already attendant upon the departing steamer, and whereon the herons ruminate (doubtless upon the ways of eels) at night. It has a life of its own, has the loch shore at the burn mouth, and the trammel nets of the local fishermen set in close proximity to it suggest that there also flounders and saithe—one hopes—are most abundantly to be found.

Yet though hardly a river—it may be some four miles in total length—the burn is of greater volume than its modest greeting of the sea would seem to promise. For when you have by road rounded the head of the loch and skirted the wooded lower slopes of the hill, the transverse glen of the burn opens up, and you suddenly come upon the sound of running water among the trees at an old stone bridge, lichen grey, with spleenwort hanging in green festoons along the courses.

To the angling wayfarer there is an irresistible fascination in a bridge as a halting place. His first look may be upstream, or it may be down, but the parapet he ultimately elects to lean over is that from which he can best pierce the water beneath. There is something of mystery in the deeper portions of every stream which challenges

investigation, and though the vista opened out by the river may arrest one's attention for a moment, one is soon unconsciously drawn again to look at the water swirling below. Is it the unwearying motion that attracts one, I wonder, or a vague expectation that a swerve in the current in the pool may reveal some hidden secret?

In prosaic fact, on this occasion I pause to see if I can locate a sea-trout behind that submerged ledge of rock—a noted resting-place of running fish—for, if he is there, it is a hundred chances to one that others of his friends and relatives, thanks to the last "bit shooer" of twenty-four hours' duration, are now in the glen.

What an extraordinary stock of sea-trout our numberless Western streams must hold in spite of nets and natural enemies. The run in this one little stream is prodigious, and the fish are of noble proportions, not mere whitling. Three-pounders and even four, five, and six pounders, are not uncommon. Nor is it in any degree remarkable that one should secure a grilse.

They say, do the natives, that with each spate the sea-trout run up, and, as the stream falls, run down again, but I should like more positive proof of an assertion which in other streams elsewhere—as in this—is said to be a fact. Sea-trout are adepts

at concealing their presence; "like rats," as it has been pithily expressed to me, they burrow into every cranny under bank and boulder, whence a worm may—but oftener will not—fetch them out in clear water. And this, I should say, is purely a worm-fishing stream, like many others of its kind, a stream of steps and stairs, of pot-holes and cataracts. "Not sport!" some may sneer, and they will be wrong. But perhaps it is just as well for its stock of fish that this particular stream is strictly preserved by the proprietor.

While we more elderly folk have paused at the bridge to consider thus the manners and customs of the sea-trout, the main body of the expedition has moved forward. There is something mightily exhilarating in the raid apart from the enjoyment one feels in again forcing one's way in congenial company through the bracken and squelching up the sodden hillside above the birch and hazel that line the stream. For the sun is out, and a party of young people is out too—for slaughter. We can hear them chattering and laughing somewhere ahead of us amongst the trees, while now and again a squeal of triumph announces the massacre of yet another innocent.

One finds the rod one carries (more or less under protest) something of a bore. Burn trout are apt

to become shy in the obvious presence of an army of rods, and there be seven of us. Truth to tell, as the river has "run off" through the night, there is but scanty hope of bigger game even were one to exercise one's utmost wariness. Soon we overtake three of the "rods"—two little girls of nine and twelve summers respectively and a boy of fourteen —all soaked to the waist, and all intently offering each a worm to the same bewildered eel. With the concentration of sportsmen, they are too much engrossed to notice us, and we pass on. Their visitors, two young girls, have been loyally conceded the courtesy of the water, and we discover them at the next bend.

But them too we leave behind, for it is our purpose to explore "The Pots," abreast of the schoolhouse. In most short streams (such as this) which fall rapidly, one might even say precipitously, to the sea, it will generally be found that this name of "The Pots" is locally given to the rough, broken channel at the neck of the gorge where the rush of water, churning the stones and gravel in spate time, has carved out smooth, fantastic holes and even arches in the solid rock. Through this lower barrier, which we first reach, the stream has dug its way, ten, fifteen, or twenty feet down. As we peer from the edge sheer into the narrow clefts, we see the

blackness of each pool shading off at the lower end to yellow gravel, and "There!" sure enough we see them, noble sea-trout, swerving to and fro, black, beneath us. I hear that a tenant of the stream once took an incredible number of them from one small pot-hole without moving his stance one yard, his gillie landing each hooked fish (as it ran down stream) in the next accessible pot below.

Beyond the meadow again, where a wooden foot-bridge and a ford lead to a shepherd's cottage, there is a still more remarkable series of pots. Deep through the rock the stream has carved and honey-combed a passage. One's nerves must be good ere one dare approach near enough to catch a glimpse of the water foaming below. From the bottom of the great cleft the mountains that oppose each other in the glen spring, and down the rugged slopes from the summits one would think that Titans in boisterous play had thundered the huge masses that bridge and hang in the gulf. An eerie sense of something dreadful impending is borne in upon one when a glimpse is caught of the toppling blue summits nearly three thousand feet above the stream. One wonders what a winter storm would be like here—and shivers. Yet, seen from the road-way, zigzagging over the neck of the pass high

overhead, the awesome spot (where we are now regaining breath after our scramble) is but a negligible detail, lost in the general contour of the vast hollow of the hills.

CHAPTER V.

A HIGHLAND LOCH.

Loch Clunie—or Cluanie, in the soft lingering drawl of the Gael—is a true rock basin, something under five miles in length, lying east of the divide, and about midway on the route which carries the wayfarer from Invermoriston, on Loch Ness side, via Glen Moriston and Glen Shiel, to the salt waters of Loch Duich.

It is a narrow loch, Loch Clunie, never more than half a mile in breadth, yet, according to the late Sir John Murray and Mr. Laurence Pullar's survey, its 1,533 million cubic feet of water entitle it to rank fourth in size, including Loch Ness itself, of the lochs of the Ness watershed. Its deepest part plumbs 123 feet, and it lies 605 feet above sea-level. To the south of it, for the loch lies east and west, splintered crags rise to a height of 2,500 feet, and the great amphitheatre of hills to the north, dominated by Sgur nan Conbhairean, in whose corries the snow lies far into July, rises to a height of 3,634 feet. Its main feeder from the west, the

river Clunie, first enters a little loch, Loch Beag, ere it enters Loch Clunie itself, and at the eastern end, whence the Moriston River issues, is a shallow basin, almost a seperate loch, about a mile in length. A tortuous channel, flanked by boulders on the one hand and sandy banks on the other, leads westward past an islet to the main sheet of water. It is this eastern basin and the shoals and boulders of the channel that have most interest for the trout angler, for here are the bigger fish, which on occasion come freely to the fly.

But the most precise bathymetrical facts do not describe Loch Clunie. The sounding wire will hardly plumb those deep reflections of hill and sky; the level will hardly define that flashing sickle of golden sand. Nor will the theodolyte mark the sagging sweep of that eagle winging to the northern hills.

Loch Clunie is a mood; and no mere mechanical contrivance of man can reproduce the silence, the solitude, and the solemnity of its spaces. One finds something of its aloofness in the literature of the Highlands; I could fancy the graver suggesting its eerieness at dawn; and the brush of some artists could happily capture the elusive sparkle of its smile at noon.

The mere descriptive writer (such as I), whose

description is an inventory, is baffled by Loch Clunie; he finds nothing to describe. He looks about and sees granite blocks protruding through peat hag and heather. Good! He notes down "granite blocks." The weathered fragments lead his mind subconsciously to the crags "whence they have toppled." He seizes on the phrase—and pauses; for just then each splintered facet in the strata flashes the light from its sloping surface, while each cleft deepens into purple and indigo shadow. Even as he looks, the mist impalpable blots out for ever for him the "note" which he has hesitated to record. He searches the loch for an appropriate foreground to his descriptive sketch. Granite block, toppling cliff, clinging mist—all inverted—are repeated. There is, however, the issuing stream; its first rush of broken water; its huge boulders. "Huge boulders" might do. Heavens! How trifling they look. Immensity and eternity confound him. A sparkle where the road runs catches his eye. A motor car! He is appalled by man's effrontery. He closes his note-book.

Yet I had the temerity to attack Loch Clunie by motor car—so demoralising a sport is angling. One may surprise it with ease by bicycle. It is but eighteen miles from Glenmoriston Hotel, and every

mile of the road is interesting; nor are the inclines steep. But to the pedestrian alone does any road surrender its more intimate charms—charms other than mere superficial beauty, or "quality of surface" in the language of the contour book. The motor car's speed is too great to permit of leisurely enjoyment; one's head turns to the side with discomfort; "eyes front" is the standing order of the day. Hence perhaps that air of haughty exclusion for which the occupants of the car deserve pity rather than blame.

But the supply and transport department has completed its work, and the expedition stands ready armed and victualled. The days of simple outfit are gone for ever—angler, flying light, rod in hand, reel in one pocket, ham sandwich in the other; where is he? Instead, the attacking party is hardly visible under a mountain of coats, waterproofs, and rugs; the rank and file consisting of two gillies, Hugh and Rory, perhaps—and a chauffeur—Brown, Jones, or, let us say, Robinson—toil panting with the impedimenta. There is one fishing basket bulging with food; another fishing basket bulging with tackle; one fish-mat crammed with more food; another fish-mat crammed with more tackle; an afternoon tea-basket; a canvas hold-all packed with the expedition's dirty-weather clothes; rubber boots;

and one straw sun-hat. And rods? There is the eleven-foot "Castleconnel" (up), spliced with sticking plaster, and the thirteen-foot "Dunkeld" (down); the twelve-foot split-cane "Hardy" (up), and the fourteen-foot greenheart (down), and then the short minnow-trolling rod (up) and two landing-nets (in case both boats be requisitioned), all whipped together in a bunch and laid in a right line, fore and aft behind the glass screen—a sight for gods and little fishes.

Along the course of the Moriston river we sweep under foliage glistening with morning light; past sullen pools of darkest umber and frothing streams where rocky overfalls churn the river into yellow foam; past the timber bridge; past the sawmills; past Dundreggan Lodge perched gracefully amidst the pines above the road. What are these odd groups of cairns among the bracken on the roadside? Each marks the halting place of mourners who accompanied some departed dead on his last earthly journey. The ancient greybeard, soon to follow, will haply tell the tale of each to those who linger on the road. We, for our part, flash into the sunshine, and the rabbits scuttle across our track.

Were ever such ancient, graceful birches and gnarled Scotch firs conceivable beyond the frames of Macwhirter's or Docharty's canvases? Or was

ever the material ugliness of Torgoyle Bridge conceivable outside a box of toys "made in Germany"? We hasten to pass the pretty lodge and cross the hideous structure in dangerous zigzag curves. Above the now sluggish stream we sweep along the barer upland hills, marsh and reed-fringed pools below, and, beyond, the crofters' huts scattered aimlessly along the Balnacarn heather. Ahead of us the modern palatial shooting box of Ceannacroc; at our side (as we pause for an opening gate) the cairn and resting place of the loyal pedlar whose chance resemblance to his bonny Prince found him here a bloody grave—or so they say.

We top a rise above the gushing Moriston and swerve round the ice-carved granite—and the loch stretches before us, sad in its solitude, grey in its ancient calm.

The cheery oyster-catchers and the fluting curlews of the lower river margins are not here, nor is there any frisking bunny or solemn-visaged sheep. We scan the margins in vain for a friendly Clunie rival; the shallows of the eastern bays are empty of all but rocks, and beyond the islet the grey spaces disclose neither life nor movement. A tiny coble and a varnished skiff, moored to a post, alone of man's handiwork, intrude on nature's privacy and seem to be conferring (in whispers) on the prowess

of their occupants on some well-remembered day. Suddenly a ring circles the water at their very sterns. Hurry with these rods, Hughie. Robinson, take the car to some bend where you can turn. Roderick, give me a hand with this confounded strap. An air from the west frosts the mirror of the loch's surface. The attack begins.

To devote his holiday entirely to fishing Loch Clunie the angler will perhaps most conveniently reside at Clunie Inn, which is rather more than a couple of miles distant from the west end of the loch. By the West Highland route one can reach the hotel from Invergarry by a road, mountainous indeed, but practicable for motor cars, to Tomdoun and thence across Glen Loyne to the Clunie basin in Glen Moriston. By the Highland Railway route, again, one may make, from Inverness by the Caledonian Canal, for Invermoriston Pier, where motor cars can be chartered for the drive up Glen Moriston. Either way the journey is a long one—something over twenty miles—but is not one of a kind to weary the lover of Highland scenery, nor, when his destination is reached, will the sportsman, jaded with town life, fail to be invigorated by the magnificent air and the sport he can surely count on. On the other hand, one may, as I had the good fortune to do, reside at Glenmoriston Hotel, and

A HIGHLAND LOCH.

vary the sport to be got on Loch Ness with an occasional day on Loch Clunie.

I fancy the angler will be safe to visit Loch Clunie any time from the beginning of May till the end of August. Probably the best month is June, though the trout, save for occasional spells of bottom feeding, never really refuse a fly even if a general rise be not frequent in the later months. It is a loch eminently suited for a light single-handed rod, for there is no occasion to cast far out from the boat, as the fish, and the best of them, rise well in the shallows. I can imagine no loch more attractive to a lady angler. At the same time the angler, with a twelve or fourteen foot rod will probably secure the heaviest basket, for with heavier tackle (as to which the trout do not seem to be particular) he will be able to force his fish away from weeds and kill them quickly, always a gain to the basket over the day when fish are coming freely.

Flies of sizes No. 9 and No 10 Limerick scale, of standard loch patterns, three on the cast if No. 9 be used and four if No. 10, appear to be most suitable for the loch. Grouse and claret, grouse and green, woodcock and yellow, with a butcher for dropper, were patterns that, in my experience, attracted favourable notice from the trout, and some good fish were taken by a blae wing and quill body

and a cinnamon fly with a gold body, which latter seems to be a favourite fly in the Ness district.

Of the Loch Clunie trout it is impossible to speak too highly. They are, when in prime condition, strong, hog-backed fish, short and broad in the shoulders, and of a most beautiful marking. They are marled rather than spotted on the back, and on a ground of rich brown, shading to gold on the belly, the thickly clustered black spots intermixed with red spots stand boldly out. When hooked, they make a rush like grilse and then spring clear of the water with surprising frequency and agility, hardly ever ceasing, indeed, until at a favourable opportunity the net envelopes them. On a good fishing day, with a clear sky and a wind, preferably from the west, few small fish will be got, the majority running about half a pound in weight. But many exceeding the pound may be looked for, and trout of a pound and a half, some of two pounds, and occasionally several over that weight, are not uncommon. The average weight of the fish taken on any day will hardly ever be less than half a pound; the average basket got by an angler will depend on his personal skill and his luck in the weather.

I prefer, in respect of any waters, to adduce in evidence baskets of which I have personal know-

ledge, often (I regret to say) miserably poor in contrast with others one hears about. Hence I shall not cite some remarkable catches reported to me by communicative gillies, nor that famous basket which, placed beneath a roadside bridge "to be called for" by the lucky anglers in due season, was meantime annexed by a humorous tramp as his own lawful spoil. But some few days before I visited Loch Clunie a Glasgow angler killed twenty-six trout, weighing twenty-one pounds, some half-dozen of which averaged two pounds apiece. From a note under date June 11, 1912, I find that my companion and I got twenty-eight trout, weighing sixteen pounds. The note bears that I had twelve before lunch-time to my friend's two, the reason being that I became alive to the fact that fish were moving deep, and, using a fourteen foot rod, I was able to sink my flies the more effectively and strike at each "touch." But I must admit the afternoon rather equalised matters.

I see that the weather conditions, on subsequent visits, were hopelessly bad, though, considering the circumstances, our baskets were respectable. The six visits we paid to the loch accounted for one hundred and two trout, weighing fifty-seven pounds, and I am certain that, under more favourable conditions, any pair of moderately good trout anglers

would find little difficulty in doubling these figures in the same period of time.

Of course, as the Moriston River issues from Loch Clunie, it is natural to expect that salmon will be found in it, and so they are. We twice saw one springing in the loch, and several times saw good fish leaping in the glide above the first pool below the loch. But they were coloured fish, and in the loch few are ever taken. By chance one was caught by a Clunie Inn angler on the day previous to one of our visits. An eight pound fish it was, captured on a small coch-y-bondhu fly, as the fortunate angler informed us. He also told us that he only knew of three ever having been taken on fly in the loch—one of them his, one by a Dundee angler, and the other, oddly enough, by his then companion in the boat. The salmon referred to was taken at the Fir Tree Bay, near the east end of the main loch, a rocky deepish spot, and indeed most of the shores of the main loch are of the same character, and one fishes therefore as close to the shore as possible, the trout lying thus along a well-defined narrow belt more suitable to be searched by one rod than by two. But in the eastern channel, every little bay and corner in the tortuous passage, and round about the little wooded islet, some very heavy trout are to be found, and all the water should be

carefully searched. The east basin, however, gives the most varied fishing, for not only is the margin productive, but all over there occur weedy and gravelly banks, easily seen in certain lights, and on and about these the trout rise freely. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that here one may drift at any point right across the loch and raise fish anywhere.

If I have lingered overlong at Loch Clunie, my excuse must be that it is the most characteristically Highland loch that I have ever fished.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUR O'CLOCK A.M.

I HAVE in my time read many a rhapsody upon the charms of night-fishing, but I must confess to a lurking suspicion as I have read that the writers were labouring hard (with tongue in cheek) to impress us favourably with what, after all, is about as dreich a business as any sane man can undertake.

Night-fishing may be—and doubtless is—a profitable pursuit for the "professional" angler, but it is not, in my opinion, a very enjoyable or even particularly meritorious pastime for the amateur sportsman. The experience on an odd occasion may be interesting and even instructive, but I cannot imagine an angler allowing the practice to develop into a habit.

It is not that I have become soured by want of success at the game, for I have, with trout, got good fish in many streams while night-fishing, and in some few have caught excellent sea-trout which in daytime despised all legal lures. In reservoirs, lochs, and lochans, too, I have cast my flies in some wee, short hour ayont the twal.

Whether one fishes from a boat or from the bank, night-fishing in a loch is easier than it is in a stream, and may be the more commended for that reason to the inexpert. I used frequently to fish Loch Lubnaig late at night and the Balvaig river which flows into it from Loch Voil, and certainly in the loch the better class of trout appeared to rise only at night. In Loch Ard, I am told, the best baskets may be got in June and July in the evening after dark falls, and I can well believe it. Most West Coast anglers, too, have fished the Clyde at night at some time or another in their career, and as its upper waters are free of trees, it is a comparatively easy river to fish in the darkness. But on the whole I have found that trout take best either in the last of the light before darkness comes on or during the first of the light as dawn begins to break. I have, however, in the Stinchar caught sea-trout at night with small flies when it was beyond the power of the human eye to discern the flies when held against the canopy overhead; when the "rise" of the fish could be heard and felt but not seen, and when the erratic course of the hooked fish could not be followed except by the sound of his splashing as he leaped.

This power of vision which enables fish to see flies in the dark has always appeared to me to verge

upon the miraculous. So, too, is the ability of some anglers to extricate three flies of a fine trouting cast entangled in the meshes of the landing net when the fish is drawn ashore. But difficult as it is, and as I have found such fishing to be, a friend informs me that sea-trout fishing at night is common in all our south-western streams, and he himself has, I am aware, made some fine baskets which have on several occasions included salmon and grilse.

I cannot conceive of an angler, who is not a very good angler, fishing a river with any comfort after the light has failed him. Absolute self-confidence is the first requisite of success, and unless the intending night-fisher is an expert manipulator of his tackle in daylight, he need not sacrifice valuable hours of sleep in attempting to manipulate it at night on the waterside. Lacking the instinctive "feel" that everything is right, he will, as often as not, waste time in examining his tackle on the mere suspicion that something is wrong when it is not really wrong, and at other times go on innocently fishing with his tail fly looped to a dropper. He will find, moreover, that estimating distances at night is a very different thing from estimating them during the day, and however well he may think he knows a stream, I guarantee that

he will be utterly bewildered on the first occasion he fishes it in the dark.

As I have said, night-fishing on a river is the business of a "professional" angler, the man who knows precisely when to vary his lure from fly to worm and from worm to minnow; the man whose profit lies in his success, and who, consequently, is able to read the water by night better than he can read his Bible by day.

I think there is more to be said in favour of morning fishing, if it is undertaken in the proper spirit. I would not say that the desire to kill fish, and that alone, constitutes the proper spirit, though it is certainly the strongest incentive towards getting one out of bed. Nor is a desire to get "the first of the water" quite the proper spirit. In fact, it is nowadays rather a futile desire. The "early bird" who makes a point of being afoot, or afloat, by half-past eight may quite well meet the man who was on the ground by six returning for his breakfast. He in turn may have found the angler who was on the water at four o'clock considering whether he might not get back to bed for a couple of hours' sleep. But already that angler's arrival had been the signal for departure of some other party who had fished all night. So that in practice, in most places where angling is a sport locally pursued, the

visitor would do well to be on the water at least the day before yesterday should he desire to have the first of it.

The worthy companion of many a good and bad day relates how he was long ago "scunnered" with the attempt to anticipate all rivals. An evening's sederunt with two mates resulted in the heroic resolve to fish the round of the clock, a resolve which was forthwith carried into effect. "Thur was," he said, "nae win' till twa in the morning, when we got a half-pun' lochy, an' the next fish we seen was at fower in the efternoon, an' no' anither beast a' day. It was a fair sieckener." Twenty-four hours' creeping and crawling by the riverside, as in Stewart's case alleged, is not angling, nor, I think, is more than eight hours' confinement in a boat on a loch.

But if one is accustomed to retire early to roost, say, by ten o'clock, it is not unreasonable to rise occasionally for a morning's fishing on loch or stream, and four o'clock is as good an hour as any at which to be up and about. It is not too early to deprive one of a complete night's rest or too late to be ineffective as morning fishing. A cup of tea before starting is a sound investment, and a bite of anything at all is a glorious preparative for one's first smoke.

Granted a certain drowsiness by four o'clock P.M., there is something wonderfully exhilarating in the freshness of the air about four o'clock on a fine summer morning. The sun has already risen, and man alone, of all animate nature, seems to be then asleep. One finds it difficult to account for all the cottages in the village standing thus apparently tenantless, still, and blank. Not a single wreath of smoke rises blue against the greenery of the glen, yet the swallows wing tirelessly round the gables, and the bees hum comfortably amongst the lilac. At the best the corner of a blind may be coyly drawn aside by some dame inquisitive to know who is thus early afoot, or perhaps the gudeman himself has arisen to see if the morning is "worth his while" also to have a cast.

After all, it is no great matter whether one, on these occasions, catches fish or not. The "proper spirit" is something less material and more intangible than the lust for the blood of the trout. It is a something which can hardly be weighed by the spring balance, however exact that instrument may be. The world is young at four o'clock in the morning, and it is well if we too, at times, may haply be young with it.

CHAPTER VII.

LOCH FREISA REVISITED.

If it be advisable for the cruising yachtsman to have at command a useful and varied assortment of sea tackle, it is equally so for the inveterate fresh-water angler (fortunate in being invited to participate in a cruise) to smuggle on board his friend's ship, if he can, an outfit capable of coping with any reasonable opportunity of sport which may chance his way. Should an unregenerate, non-angling host remonstrate, one may perhaps be able to convince him how easily rods can be slung beneath the cabin racks; and in any event it would hardly be worth the owner's while to send his dinghy back, say, from Kerrera to Oban, even to get rid of "all that confounded, useless truck."

That at least was how I came to revisit Loch Freisa; but not from Oban as the crow would fly, for Loch Linnhe, Loch Sunart, aye, and Loch Scavaig too, had each in turn been explored ere, anchored for the second time at Tobermory, I cast

my flies once again on Loch Freisa where some sixteen years before I had cast them.

We had run as it happened from Scavaig warned by a falling glass. It is certainly no port to make for in a storm, and is a treacherous one at best at any time. A "wind" from any quarter there means squalls from every quarter, and "a shift to the south" bottles one up perhaps for days moored precariously by hawsers in the lee of an islet in two fathoms of seething foam at the foot of inhospitable hills towering three thousand feet or so overhead. The "Sailing Directions" make timorous reading for the landsman, and indeed the barbarous nomenclature of the chart conveys a hint of tragedy which the splintered pinnacles of the Cuchullins threaten to confirm.

We counted ourselves fortunate in beating into the anchorage in smooth water against a light north-easterly air. Gairsbheinn, "the Hills of the Roaring Blast" (as the authorities fearfully interpret it), had at the moment no terrors, and indeed I was too busy with the jib sheets, as the ship put about and about to clear Eilean Reamhar and the Broad Rocks, Sgeir Doighich, and Eilean Glas, and that treacherous submerged reef in the fairway, to notice that we had fetched up, apparently (under Sgor Dhu) in the chaotic gloom of some primordial creation.

But I attempt no reiterated description of Loch Scavaig, or of Loch Coruisk either. My purpose is to say that while I have the sincerest sympathy with any proprietor who may seek to guard his salmon fishings from the depredations of vagrant yachtsmen (who erstwhile found Loch Scavaig a happy hunting ground), the Vandal and Goth who erected a corrugated iron bothy, and thus prosaically blighted the grandest scene in Scotland, deserves scanty consideration.

We had run, I say, from Scavaig, and a stiff nor'-easter brought us up once more in Tobermory Bay. I love this quaintest of Highland anchorages, into whose shelter in a gale waddles or flaps all the varied shipping of the West Coast. I love it best of a Sunday morning, when no discordant sound or movement disturbs the amphitheatre from Aros House to the Distillery, from the Distillery to the Presentation Clock, from the Presentation Clock to the Mishnish Hotel, and from the Mishnish Hotel to the Pier. Not a gull stirs on his chosen post of observation. The prim houses in a solemn row concentrate a surprised stare upon intruders, while the Western Isles Hotel holds itself aloof on the heights in supercilious meditation. Through the cordage of black, weather-beaten coasters and dapper white cruising ketches the morning sun glints scarlet

on some of MacBrayne's funnels, and dour and drab, over the sunken romance of Spain, swings a dredger at its moorings.

But this is Saturday evening, not Sunday morning, and by seven o'clock I find myself, rods, flies, and incidental gear stowed comfortably enough on board a dog-cart at the door of the Mishnish Hotel. It might still be sixteen years ago, but now a nephew, not an uncle, cheers me on my way, and (if I may venture to say so) I miss the buxom presence, too, of one to whom we amateur sea-dogs were wont to lament our piscatorial misfortunes and (had we occasion to do so) brag about our piscatorial successes.

Donald, on the back seat, gives me scanty ground for hope. Is it not an east wind? And did not "the Colonel," a real bonny fisher, only get eleeven on the Thursday? What matter! Am I not again breasting the hill above the town? There's the reservoir sure enough! And the Poorhouse! And Lower Mishnish at last! No; hardly that now, for the levels of the loch of that name have been altered, and the once excellent drift down the middle of the middle sheet is (I learn) a thing of the past. What beauties, doubtless magnified by time, we got there once! But we pass the head of the Mishnish group and I rub my eyes, for an unremembered

sheet appears on the right. I swear Loch Freisa used to lie to the left. It is a new artificial sheet we see—the Torr Loch, they call it—famous for sea-trout in the autumn, but not accessible, alas, to any chance comer. Our course *is* to the left, and, abandoning our vehicle and the road at last, we swing afoot round the heathery shoulder of the hill and down through the bracken in single file on the old track. Grey to the eastward stretches Loch Freisa in the falling light.

It is of no particular interest to describe such sport as rewarded my two hours' efforts. The fourteen trout retained probably weighed rather over than under a total of four pounds; the number unintentionally restored to liberty exceeded a dozen, and amongst these was an unmistakable sea-trout of gigantic size which foiled me by taking cover amongst some boulders. The main thing is to record the joy of revisiting pleasant solitudes; to hear the wavelets lap, lap, lapping round miniature skerries; to recognise each bold little headland and each fishable bay; and to see the mystery of night descending upon the hills as the boat draws into the landing place.

Yet there be practical souls who desire practical hints, and for these one might add that ordinary Loch Leven flies will do, but are rather small, for

Loch Freisa. Three flies on the cast of No. 10 Limerick scale are about the mark, and if of these one be a "Butcher," another a "Red Palmer," and the third a "Zulu," local preference and the angler will alike be satisfied. A ten foot rod will serve.

As at Loch Badachreamb in the north, and elsewhere, it is remarkable how readily the trout of Loch Freisa take flies trolling behind the boat. I fancy more might be so taken than by casting. One reason may be that the trout are extremely numerous—far too numerous indeed to attain any great average weight—but the fact that they lie and feed in shallow water on a marginal shelf may account for the proclivity, as I have noticed that, under such conditions, trout are not very shy of a boat.

It is possible at any rate to make tremendous baskets at Loch Freisa, doubtless because fish are caught both on the drift and when getting back to the head of it. As to this I may appropriately conclude with reference to a June basket made not very long ago by an angling friend, a fair average fisher. It consisted of 538 trout caught in eighteen days' fishing, weight 184 pounds. I do not care how soon I visit Loch Freisa again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RANK BAD DAY.

M'Kellar certainly foretold the consequences (and the facts bear him out to some extent), but whether or not the leaving of my rod ashore when we started for the fishing ground was the cause of the ill-luck which followed may well be left to be determined by the student of Highland superstitions. At any rate, the day did prove barren in results so far at least as these might be computed in pounds avoirdupois. But to some there might appear to be compensations. Let us see.

Those who have ever had the good fortune to walk down the village street of Luss at eight o'clock of an August morning may confidently be appealed to to say whether the mind, even of an angler, is solely occupied with the material consideration of tackle. Let him be never so particular as to his paraphernalia of rods, oil-skin suit, landing-net, and gaff; precise even to pernicketiness as to the minor accessaries of his sport; and scrupulously careful in the by no means least important matter of his

own and his honest henchman's provender. Let him be never so precise (I say); he will, if he be a true angler, and therefore a born lover of nature, encounter a distracting element in the freshness of the morning air; in the mist that hangs about the shoulders of Ben Lomond; in the smoke that curls up from the breakfast fires of a score of cottages; and even, if he be not a misogynist, in the swing of the skirts of that—yes—that rather dainty English girl who is hastening down to the pier. Distracting element enough will the cynic echo, but heed him not.

It was rather the question of how much piscivorous diet would be daily absorbed by those mergansers busily feeding at the burn mouth which engrossed me while our multifarious tackle was being stowed away on board. That may be why I left my rod lying aimlessly beside young M'Gibbon, who, bailing his craft of some overnight rain, grinned with a sardonic grin when we had to return over quarter of a mile of water to make good my oversight.

The character of the weather, I think (with all respect to M'Kellar and the students aforesaid), was chiefly to blame for the ill-luck which followed, but if there be any who contend for my personal incompetence, while readily conceding it, I may

charitably hope that their greater skill may never be undeservedly disappointed.

There had been a full five weeks of shine and heat, unvaried by even a cloudy sky, but the weather was manifestly breaking, and a steadily falling barometer foretold at last the long-looked-for Lammas floods. Doubtless the fish were in the loch, and clean fish too—one saw them leaping now and again in their efforts to detach the vampire lampreys —but no inducement of tinsel or feather had been able to lure more than the occasional odd fish to the hook.

So had it happened from day to day, nor was ever the spirit weary on the morning drift or the heart bowed down of an evening with hope deferred. For what weather prophecy ever kept angler from his sport, or when, indeed, was ever a meteorological forecast deemed to be accurate?

Things certainly looked better this morning, and a pleasant easterly air sent a heartsome jabble against the rocky point of Fraoch Eilan; a myriad sparkles came from the bracken; and the splashes of sunlight reflected from the rocks helio'd cheerily to us as we pulled out twixt the twin islets of the steamer's track.

Kindly and sympathetic souls will tolerate a vast deal of fustian in an angling writer for sake of even

the thinnest strand of gold. Such fustian is inevitable. For one cannot see—as we see in passing—a flock of oyster-catchers dipping low for instant flight without comment, and even the sight of a lynx-eyed old cormorant on the beacon has a significance which challenges remark. But it requires the pen of a master to imbue with the vital spark of truth a description of slumberous hills, to convey a hint of the glow of the rowan and the grace of the birch, the scent of the lowly bog myrtle and the rugged pine, and to communicate to others the recognition that every true Highlander has at his heart of ancient, long-forgotten things.

Be this as it may, the baneful influence of our inauspicious start (must my secret beliefs be at last confessed!) first appeared as we drifted at the tail of the dying morning air across the point of Inch Connachan. For here, where many a good sea-trout lies, rose to us the father of many blacknebs, but which, lightly hooked, escaped death and destiny for that time at least after one heart-thrilling rush. "Man! man! But that's awfu!" quoth M'Kellar; "and the wind's awa'," for a glassy wave alone was left, and black indeed did the reflections of the pine trees seem in the inky depths—black as our own!

But the day is still young, and for lack of better

employment we explore the undergrowth of the island for glimpse of a reputed albino deer, and decorate the prow of the ship with a spray of heather, to be later on perhaps, at Darroch, graced with a sprig of crab-apple, badge appropriate to the clan which (happily for me) the Campbells did not wholly exterminate. Then suddenly, with a rustling overhead, the wind announces its welcome advent. So we push our craft afloat, to find that a north-westerly breeze is freshening with amazing quickness.

The question of strategy becomes insistent, for we are by no means alone upon the loch. Away to the right off The Geggle—that loch within a loch—two boats are now lying placed for an advantageous drift. Towards The Big Stone, on Inch Cruin, three others are already working, while behind us out from Luss streams the remnant of the fishing fleet. Clearly in no long time there will be a glut of boats at Darroch.

A glance at far Strathcashel reveals a solution which obviously jumps with M'Kellar's inclinations, for, "It's a risk, lad," says he, "but we'll awa' across and tak' our chance at the big fellow."

It ought to be stated that, so far, the only real "show" of sea-trout had been seen amongst the islands, and that there alone as yet had the few

"baskets" been made. But it ever irks me to fish in a crowd, and salmon are always on Strathcashel Point despite the nets. So out we edge at right angles to our former course—out to the open in a fresh nor'-wester. And here we are in luck.

Away from beyond Bucinch, a friendly motor boat observes our manœuvre, and with considerate kindliness bears down upon us with the offer of a tow most gladly accepted. On we go exhilarated with the pace, the envious beam sea clipping sharp spirts of spray over the slim sweater-clad figure of our fourteen-year-old commander—malicious spirts, which are disregarded save for a toss of flaxen curls or an added sparkle of merry blue eyes. Away we go, to be cast off again well to windward of our point of attack, and, as our youthful benefactress waves us "Good luck!" I undertake boastfully to show her a salmon hooked within twenty minutes.

The wind offers the choice of a "draw" to the north and a "drift" to the south of the point. We elect the "draw," and methodically M'Kellar works his boat along the face, whilst I, nerves a-tingle, search the water with big sea-trout flies. A sparking rise—a strike—and thump comes a seven-inch parr against the gunwale of the boat. "Confound the beast!" But I adjust the bob fly, and cast again. Suddenly in the jabble and foam

the line becomes rigid for an instant and a responsive strike sends the hook home with a shriek of the reel. "Got him, by Jove!" and down I settle on the cross board in a tension of delight to play the fish, while out from the dangerous point to the deep draws M'Kellar. "I ken't he was there," says he with much satisfaction, "ye were gey near The Cockit Stane!"

We care not if all the boats were round us now! But what is this? Out we draw, and out follows the fish, offering no other resistance to the bending rod than a sullen thud, thud of the unseen tail. Such conduct is surely unnatural. Up he comes nearer and nearer the boat. I reel in line inch by inch. Will he never run? In still further—the knot of the cast comes into view—in yet, and the bob fly appears—then—a vast commotion of the water—the flies spring into the air—and our fish is gone! Blank dismay is the immediate sensation. But as the tragedy of disappointment begins to be realised, exasperation with our ill-luck, grim in its silent intensity, broods upon the face of the waters. If possible, an even deeper note is sounded by the remark, "And no a single drap o' consolation in the boat!" for my fellow-sufferer has just recalled the fact that our reformed practice is to fish on *milk!* Yet, notwithstanding, he is the first to

recover practicality, and a wealth of encouragement lies in his philosophical "Try again, sir, he's maybe no there himsel'!"

And we do try again, drawing down to the gravel beach where two seasons ago opposite that young ash tree, we killed a thirteen and a half pound fish after a memorable struggle. Back we draw again to the point without result, and down the south side we drift in a yeasty sea, shrouded in a slashing shower. It drives us for shelter behind the islet, where we land as the one o'clock steamer breasts Inch Fad.

Glad enough are we by this time to seek shelter —and sustenance too—for a big sea is running before the squally north-west wind, most impossible of fishing winds—and even the broken in spirit must eat at last!

Would only the gale moderate now, surely our plight is not so bad, for, with this wind, besides another drift on Strathcashel Point, have we not before us a long stretch of well-nigh classic shore? Ten minutes will see us on "The Kritreoch," that boulder-strewn beach where grilse love to assemble unafraid of the deadly net. Beyond is the Blair Burn, home of the hugest fish, and does not The Green Point of Millarachy lie adjacent, with, further on, as a last resource ere the day is over,

The Black Rocks of Arrochymore Point. "Cheer up, oh sage M'Kellar; the day is by no means done. 'I see some sparkles of a better hope.'"

Thus I, and if it be not simply that my spirit is reinforced by lunch, surely the wave no longer runs so high. At least the rain squall is past, so we again essay the deep. But as we race before the following seas, it is only too clear that effective casting is out of the question yet awhile, and, as again we seek inglorious refuge in the corner of the Kritreoch Bay, it must be in derision that a ten-pounder leaps clear of the water within an oar's length of our very boat. Again the white squall; again the driving rain; again a trial of patience ashore behind a pile of sheltering timber.

Do we curse our luck and gnash our teeth at fate? To be perfectly candid, I have a most refreshing slumber wherein I am engaged hooking and landing enormous sea-trout in an absolute calm, till someone irrelevantly remarks, "It's no sae fierce the now!" and I am once more conscious that the day is fishable. But the day is really done, and we know it in our heart of hearts, for two "turns" down to the Blair Burn yield nothing but labour, nor is the Green Point more productive save for a grilse, which rises head and shoulders "to himself," but not, alas! to me.

Is that really the smoke of the evening steamer hanging behind the trees of Inch Cailleach? Matters are indeed desperate; but the Scots are a dour race. "We'll gie the Black Rocks a bit turn yet," says my guide, philosopher, and friend; "and we'll can work hame in the lee of Inch Fad." No sooner said than done, and down the last drift of the day we go in a shower that engulfs the passing steamer and spits viciously against our oilskins. It is in vain. We search every cranny of the rocky islet and the old pier for "His Majesty." He is not at home. We draw out and cover the Old Manse Bay for a sea-trout, and a solitary blackneb rewards our toil. At the end of the drift, at the end of the day, at the tail of a strong north-west wind, we find ourselves a good four miles from Luss.

Four miles to pull against a head wind in the falling dusk is not, certainly, an alluring prospect, and the stranger to Loch Lomond would say that here was a peculiarly miserable plight. But the comfort—and, indeed, the safety—of Loch Lomond lies in this, that there is always a lee. So that the short, sharp burst to the house on Inch Fad breaks the back of the return journey, our only discomfort being the inordinate clamminess of oilskins in a stiff pull. The shelter of this island once gained, we row in a dead calm along its southern face to

Darroch, and have leisure to admire the amazing thoroughness with which the driving showers wipe out, as a sponge does from a slate, the outline of the chain of islands stretching away towards Balloch. We force our boat through the gut at Darroch, on past Ireland to the lee of Inch Cruin, and again find ourselves in untroubled waters. Through the opening between Inch Moin and Inch Cruin we go, and make for the silent, winding, wind-protected straits between Inch Connachan and Inch Tavannach, beautiful ever in the day and more mysteriously beautiful at night. For night it almost is with that accumulation of banking mist obscuring the north. A last effort as we emerge from the straits carries us to Fraoch Eilan and the mouth of the burn, and I am not certain that M'Kellar is not crooning some kind of a song peacefully to himself when we run our boat finally ashore on the slip.

A bad day, truly; but a bad day, I am inclined to think, with compensations.

CHAPTER IX.

IT'S AN ILL WIND.

THINGS had indeed got to a pretty pass at Luss. Seldom in any year had anglers mustered in such force, and seldom in any year had worse sport been experienced. Day in and day out demoralised fly-fishers had taken to dragging ineffective trolling baits through miles of unremunerative water. Some even sought distraction in killing perch at the burn mouth. Things had indeed reached a pretty pass.

Day in and day out the idle boats would lie blistering in the sun in wellnigh unbroken tier, while under the shadow of the pierhead house or at the store gable-end would drowse and loll through the weary hours of the afternoon the keenest and most capable of boatmen. What cared they were salmon rumoured at Tarbet? Darroch was done! What if the Rowardennan nets did get a haul of sea-trout? Auld yins! What if Mr. Greenwell did raise a grilse at the Fruin? How mony fish had Mr. Sellar seen on Inch Cruin? Whaur wis the blacknebs? And pipes would again be lit, and

lack-lustre eyes would follow the course of the steamer making for Balmaha over the glassy surface of the lake. It was vain to argue. Hope itself was dead!

Things had indeed reached a pretty pass at Luss. On the stoep of the Colquhoun Arms Hotel, knots of malcontents would gather and disperse throughout the day, would gather and dispute and disperse again in disgust.

"There's only one explanation possible," groans an Englishman; "the fish are not there—the Clyde nets have got 'em all."

"Quite impossible!" says a Scot; "the nets can't take fish under a pound, and there aren't even blacknebs."

"That's easily explained," says another; "the fish are there, but the confounded powan fishers have frightened them into deep water."

"If the fish were there," says a fourth, "the Duke's nets would see them, but they drew a blank yesterday at Strathcashel. In my opinion they've cleaned that coast."

"It's all tripe about nets," says one having local knowledge; "I've been here five weeks without seeing a fish. The real reason is that the stranded *Prince Edward* has blocked the Leven at Bonhill. The fish wont pass her."

"Rot!" cries a Vale man; "it's the Leven Harbour blasting does it. I've heard of tons of fish being killed."

"The fact is," said a quiet man, "I've no faith in that hatchery work. They simply harry the natural spawning redds."

Electric storms—lack of May-fly—an eclipse of the moon—all and each are suggested as the true and only cause of the collapse. Nobody blames the weather.

Things had indeed come to a pretty pass at Luss. Yet a falling glass overnight still brings no "dirt" into the clear morning light. Nothing of promise is there but those towering white cumulus clouds which drawing masters of the mid-Victorian school loved to pick out with curly chalk edges on the sketches of their fairer pupils. But a kindly westerly wind blows, so promising a breeze indeed that I hasten to invite friend Peter to share with me the expected sport of the day. There is at least a fishing wind, and it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and that good may be ours. So, with lighter hearts, we pull through The Straits to test for ourselves the long drift from Inch Galbraith to Darroch.

One has time to note in passing the change that the wood-cutter may effect in a brief period in a

familiar landscape. The larches of Inch Connachan and Inch Tavannach have disappeared under saw and axe, and the sky line is lowered nigh a hundred feet in places. We deplore the fact, and slip out past the old ruin on Inch Moin.

And a fair west wind it is that comes chopping over from Rossdhu on a short sea, and both rods work with regularity as the boat follows the curve of the mid-bank in the sandy bay. "Confound those cumulus clouds!" With so perfect a wind something should surely rise in spite of them; and something does, for a sudden strike by Peter in the bows gives us hope, albeit no material result ensues. Yet it is a rise of sorts, and may be the first of many, though we like the day's appearance less and less.

But the wind holds true for the drift across the First Point, and a diagonal draw out upon the Long Point and a quick fall in beyond give pleasant casting for both bow and stern. And all at once it dawns upon me that over the vast expanse of visible fishing ground from Inch Galbraith to Inch Cailleach we are the sole craft afloat—a fact unprecedented, one would say, in August, but a fact pregnant of meaning. And the meaning is only too clear, for Inch Cruin yields nothing, nor does the draw to Ireland, nor yet again the long drift down the north shore of Inch Fad. In the whole course

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of our progress one solitary rise has rewarded our toil. "Confound these cumulus clouds!" and into the lee near the house on Inch Fad we shoot for a belated lunch.

By Jove! But it's hot as we get ashore, and over the Endrick Bank and beyond The Ben to the north the clouds go piling white in mosque and battlement and stupendous dome. Beneath, the leaden haze creeps over all, and the sullen wind in shifty fashion seeks shelter in the woody recesses beyond Millararchy Bay. "It" is not long in coming, for hardly are we on the Green Point when flash after flash incessantly flickers far from south to north, and into a frost-white flat of hail is beaten the remnants of the dying wind.

We cower beneath the rattling downpour, and gauge the passage of the storm by the late and later reverberations of the thunder peals. In a lull we draw to the Kritreoch, and watch once more the hailstones sweep the weather horizon into white. Again the incessant flash and roar, and up to Strathcashel we pull in the murky gloom. A solitary boat draws off the point and makes for Luss as we approach.

On us at last is borne the presage of defeat, for though a sullen fish moves late at my fly the strike is vain. The banking clouds have massed and

settled to the north and choked for good the dispirited wind. To the westwards a gleam of the setting sun breaks through the rags of the storm, and over an oily sea we pull for home.

Apparently excitement moves the urchins on the beach. "They hae!"—"They hinna!"—"Aye, they huv!" they say. What do they mean? "Naw! The net's no shiftet! They've naething'!" The observant child is correct. Nothing they have! Yet what is this I hear? "Andra's got three!" Three what? "Three salmon!" Impossible! Yet true it is, and of a verity. The solitary boat leaving Strathcashel Point had in fact three salmon on board of it. Truly it's an ill wind indeed that blows nobody any good. But the good has not been ours.

Hope springs anew, and to-morrow is another day at Luss.

CHAPTER X.

A PLAIN TALE.

I RECENTLY came upon the suggestion—though I cannot remember precisely where—that an account of the capture of a salmon, which might include details of the performance from start to finish, would be interesting and informative to the non-angling reader. From the general resemblance (I suppose) which one fish bears to another fish, some good people who are not anglers are apt to imagine that the capture of one salmon is very much like the capture of any other salmon. Nothing, as the angler is aware, could be further from the fact. Hence it is that no description can ever be very informative, and an ideal description specially composed for the occasion, even if it were worth writing, would be of no greater value than the plain truth.

The slaying of a salmon, to many, is a commonplace occurrence enough; to me a "salmon day" is still a red-letter day, and the circumstances of every such occasion (from its rarity) stand out so clearly and vividly in my mind that I have never any great difficulty in recalling them. A descrip-

tion of the most recent may perhaps serve as an example.

To tell the truth, my friend M'Kellar and I were pretty hopeless of securing any sport at all on that occasion. A baffling easterly air and a smirr of rain falling from a gloomy sky had done hardly more for many hours than deposit tons of Glasgow soot on the surface of Loch Lomond. Nor had a decent sea-trout lost at the net, on the Green Bank of Millarachy, made for merriment. I was in consequence all the more disposed to agree to the suggestion to "dauner hame," provided we did so via the Kitreoch and Strathcashel, between which points were certain noble fish located, and where, in especial, I had already (on a previous occasion) risen one. The outlook was certainly gloomy, but it is a bad fishing day indeed when conditions are never at any point of time in the angler's favour.

The difficulty on such a day is to be at the right place, at the right time, with the right tackle; and at a late hour in the afternoon we were beginning to be conscious that we had failed to solve the difficulty. Small wonder that the despondency of the waning autumn day reflected itself in our mental if not physical attitude. At any rate, my pipe declined to draw properly, and M'Kellar's protracted silence gave me the uneasy

feeling that somehow I had unwittingly offended him. In fact, things were going from bad to worse when a blink of sunshine broke through the clouds hanging over Camstraddan Hill.

It was possibly no more than sheer luck that directed our craft, about five o'clock, to the vicinity of a willing fish; there was luck, too, in the fact that, as we skirted the rocks above the Kritreoch, a fresh south-westerly breeze should suddenly spring up; there was even luck in this that I had been too disheartened to remove from my fourteen-foot rod the cast of flies expressly (but uselessly) selected to delude the salmon of Millarachy Bay. Any Loch Lomond angler will appreciate the outfit—"Burton's Fancy" for tail fly, and a "mallard and yellow" for dropper, both of size No. 7 Limerick scale—I love to be particular as to facts of real importance. The mile and a half "carry" from Inch Fad was already beginning to send a jabble of waves into the clefts and crannies of the conglomerate rock when we rounded the blunt promontory and drew along towards the south beach of Strathcashel.

"Have you ever seen him there?" I asked friend John, nodding towards and casting carefully into the little gravelly inlet, where (with Andra) I had previously risen the fish. "No just there," was

the response as we drew past the spot without result, "he aye lies to feed nearer the rock yonder; your next cast will cover the bit. I've got him there twice in my time; once with—Gosh! ye hev'm!" With a magnificent lunge a salmon on the very instant snatched at my tail fly as it lifted from the water for another cast on the spot indicated. I covered him again, believing, as I do, that a willing fish should be instantly humoured, and he swirled beneath the fly. I covered him a third time, and he rose and snapped—and missed. My fourth cast caught a floating weed. "Ye gods!" I swore, and trembled with excitement and vexation.

"Caw canny, man; caw canny!" cautioned the veteran as he drew the boat off a dozen yards or so, "sort yer flees and gie him another try. He's no frichted." Craftily we edged in again—a first cast—a second—and—the strike sent the steel firmly home in the big jaws that snapped on the fly—the fish was hooked!

It was with an indescribable feeling of nervous elation that I settled myself to play the fish as he bored up into the wind with the boat pounding over the seas after him. Not yet had the rush come; and, when it came, would the tackle hold? Steadily outwards and into the depths he bored, and then—a shrieking reel stripped of fifty yards of line and

the wild leap of a fish far out on the right were almost simultaneous and breathless occurrences. The line bellied in the wind and fell slack on the water. "Gone!" There was nothing for it but to reel in.

"Haud up, sir; haud him up! He's no awa'!" The line thrilled and tautened as it came home on the reel and the boat veered off—the fish was still fast.

Tackle, and a hold, that could stand the strain of such a rush and leap could surely stand another. It did; and another breathless interval ensued. Then back shorewards before the seas he cruised, escaping a dilapidated fence by a yard or so, and along Strathcashel beach he went, his dark form showing at times through the wave against the yellow gravel as he sailed along.

There was something of offended dignity in his progress along the beach, a progress we were unable to check, but which, willy-nilly, must be interrupted ere he reached the dangerous channel twixt the crannog and the shore. By good luck he made for the open of his own accord, and now we had thoughts of leading him northwards into the lee of Strathcashel Point itself. Reeling in and rowing out, we nursed him onwards, but once again he made inshore, and the gut as he loitered, dorsal fin and

tail out of water, stretched taut across the sunken ledge near the great stone of the point. Off at a tangent went the boat again into the open, with rod held high that the twanging line might safely clear the rocks, and out again to the open followed the fish. The point was weathered.

With a half-lee ahead and an exhausted fish to windward the oars may be safely shipped and the gaff laid handy. It is now that the angler begins to realise the pent excitement of the struggle, when the fish turns on his side once and once again, and few there are who do not fret at the deliberate action that is now all essential.

He comes floating nearer and nearer—how pitiably helpless he looks!—the gaff stretches out—he swings to the bow, then turns to the stern and swerves toward the bow again. The suspense is horrible.

A quick strike—a lift—a splash of water—a thud in the boat. "Pit it there!" says M'Kellar, stretching forth a shaking hand to mine, and mine is put "there" with right goodwill. The strain is off my mind and rod (and left biceps) at last, and he is a twelve-pounder at the very least.

"A braw fish!" conceded Andra, a little regretfully, that night when he heard the story; "I doot he was mines."

"He's no yours noo!" returned M'Kellar.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE IT LISTETH.

THERE is an old popular rhyme concerning the wind of which Walton gives us this scrap:—

". . . when the wind is south,
It blows your bait into a fish's mouth."

Mr. Francis Francis—in *A Book on Angling*—puts it in this way:—

"When the wind blows from the west,
It blows the hook to the fish's nest;
When the wind blows from the south,
It blows the hook to the fish's mouth;
When from the north and east it blows,
Seldom the angler fishing goes."

The last couplet I have also seen somewhere expanded to this effect:—

"When the wind is in the north,
The careful angler goes not forth;
When the wind is in the east,
'Tis good for neither man nor beast."

It would be interesting to learn which—or perhaps I should rather say what—is the original version of the old rhyme. Possibly some erudite reader may know when and where it first appeared in print.

Such rhymes survive long enough to become proverbial, partly because they express an idea tersely and simply, but no doubt also because they contain some germ of truth, the kind of generic truth (to quote another example) which is expressed by the lines—

> "An apple a day
> Keeps the doctor away."

But though there may be broad general grounds for discriminating between the various winds that blow, the enthusiastic angler must be very "careful" indeed if he will not venture forth in a north wind, or be a very thankless man if he grumbles because the wind is in the east. No doubt, on most occasions, "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw," we on the Atlantic side of Scotland "dearly like the west," but I fancy the angler bound for Loch Leven would prefer a wind from some more easterly airt. The truth is that the preference for any particular direction of the wind is mainly a matter of local circumstance, and, if the angler be a loch

fisher, he is mighty lucky if he get any wind at all. On the whole, there are grounds for suspicion that the author of the lines first quoted was not an angler.

Fortunately for the Scot, wind on the river is not as a rule a factor essential to his day's sport. Some streams there are, like the Add, the Dochart, the Balvaig, and the Allan Water near Greenloaning (to instance a few which first come to mind) where the absence of wind may prove fatal, but for the most part Scottish streams provide the angler with sufficient broken water to lend adventitious aid to his methods if not concealment to himself. And there can be no question that on most streams no wind at all is infinitely preferable to the kind of wind that seems to blow from every quarter, baffling one at every turn.

The only occasion on which I remember actually praying for a breeze was once on a Highland stream when trout seemed to be ravenously feeding on flies, and midges were without any question ravenously feeding on me. A hot August afternoon it was, and in spite of fairly good sport I was forced at last to give it up and take inglorious refuge in flight. In such a contingency wind would have been a priceless boon, but, in truth, on any summer day much of the exhilaration that one finds in the sport of river fishing is attributable to the life and

motion given to one's surroundings by a pleasant breeze.

It is of course for the mechanical assistance afforded by it that the angler values the wind in a day's river fishing. The trout angler will hope for an up-stream wind and the salmon fisher will eagerly inquire of his gillie if he may expect a down-stream wind on the morrow. The two types of fishing are diametrically opposite; the trout angler (modern style) casts up stream with flies which approximate as closely to some natural insect as possible, leaving it to the flow of the water to bring them "home" ere another cast be made. The object of the salmon fisher is, by casting across and downwards, to search every yard of the pool with a "something," confected of tinsel and feathers, approximating to nothing on earth, tethered to his cast. In either case a "head wind" makes of the angler's gentle recreation rather a back-breaking business, and it is probably more accurate to say that the mechanical assistance of a following wind is nothing in comparison with the advantage of not having an adverse wind against you.

At the same time, it is plain that a breeze which ruffles the stiller pools will give the angler more fishable water in any given distance, and I think

it is fairly certain that river trout take most boldly —whether they hook better is an open question— when a good breeze is blowing. I have found them in particular take freely in the jabble caused by the up-stream wave meeting the down-flowing water.

In loch fishing there is hardly any factor which contributes more to the angler's success than the wind. This is clearly proved by the poverty of the reported catches which appear in the newspapers during a spell of anticyclonic conditions. Indeed, the peaceful calm of an Indian summer is not easily to be distinguished from the winter of an angler's discontent. Wind, and wind from any quarter, the loch angler must have. I am aware that some fortunate few have made splendid baskets in Loch Leven by casting over rising fish in a calm. But its extensive shallow feeding grounds and multitudinous stock of fish make Loch Leven an exceptional loch, and the few who profit under such conditions are exceptional anglers. In some well-stocked reservoirs trout will take freely now and again in a calm during the "evening rise," which, by the way, occurs oftenest when it is calm. And in strictly preserved lochs which are rarely fished, trout will sometimes take boldly when the surface is like

a mirror. But these also are exceptional cases, and I think it may be taken as an axiom that in loch fishing absence of wind means absence of sport.

To cover feeding fish the boat must cover ground, and I am convinced that in a flat calm the fish quickly become aware of any disturbance caused by an approaching boat, and cease rising even if experience has not already made them both hook shy and gut shy. Waves in a loch serve the same purpose as broken running water in a river; they help to make the tackle inconspicuous and afford some concealment to the angler.

I think Mr. Hamish Stuart has given rise to the belief that sea-trout may be successfully angled for in lochs in what one might otherwise consider hopelessly calm weather. If they are anywhere so caught with anything like ease and freedom, it must be in lochs of no great depth, where so impulsive a fish has no time for second thoughts; and also it must be, I fancy, in waters which are not persistently fished by all types of angler with every type of tackle. In my experience, sea-trout of all fish are most easily fished down by being fished over, and once they have ceased to rise with freedom, it seems to take a "dirty" day of wind and rain to bring them once more to a state of greedy unsuspicion. At the same time, when they are inclined

to rise they do so best and "take" with most deadly accuracy in a ripple rather than a wave, while salmon (which people sometimes assert will rise in any circumstances and at anything) seem to me to prefer a wave rather than a ripple. Provided the character of the wave, and perhaps the light, be right, I do not think that the migratory fish when clean-run care very much which direction the wind comes from.

I fancy on the whole that a warm, moist wind, which in the West of Scotland is generally a south-west wind, is most favourable to the hatching out of water insects, and it is to them rather than to the multitude of artificial patterns that are presented to their notice, that a rise of trout is due. If rain accompany the wind, there is the further addition of an infinite variety of food, which encourages the trout to look about him.

Hence let us look to the south-west and a murrain take those northerly and easterly airs which seem of late years to have become a permanent feature of Scottish summers. They are in truth "no good" for either man or beast—angler or fish.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCH OR STREAM.

One often hears it urged that the pleasure of a day's fishing on a loch will not bear comparison for an instant with the enjoyment to be derived from a day's fishing on a stream. In such discussions as the assertion commonly gives rise to one is seldom wholly convinced by the arguments of either of the contending parties. Your true enthusiast has no great wish to be converted to either view, for he hails with an equal degree of eagerness—namely, the maximum—whatever angling expedition may chance to be afoot, whether it be to loch or riverside, and, it might even be added, whether salmon or fingerlings are in prospect. Yet the debate, however unpractical, sometimes brings into prominence features of both branches of the sport not always appreciated, and so perhaps I may be permitted to disentangle my own ideas on the subject so far as it concerns the average Scottish angler.

If one were to estimate their comparative

popularity by the numbers pursuing them respectively, river fishing would unquestionably bear away the palm from loch fishing. But mere numbers in this matter are no true criterion, because loch fishing is the most costly form of the sport, and has consequently the fewer votaries. Assuming the original cost of outfit to be the same for both, and that travelling expenses are equal, there will be for each outing on a loch the superadded hire of a boat and practically, in most cases, the wage of a boatman as well. Rarely will these items amount together to less than seven shillings per day, and with obvious extras the total cost may easily exceed ten shillings. To the great majority of anglers such an expense is plainly prohibitive, and the inevitable tendency in fact has been for lochs to become more and more the resort of the wealthier section of the angling community. Apart from preference, therefore, the economic factor at once accounts for the multitudes of anglers who fish our rivers in preference to our lochs, and, putting it upon the lowest ground, river fishing may be said to be more popular than loch fishing because it is cheaper.

In comparison with fly-fishing on a river, fly-fishing on a loch is a simple art. To go further, it might be said that the difficulties of capturing

trout with fly in these days in any river are so enormous that it is a matter of astonishment to find so many anglers attempting it.

On a favourable day at Loch Leven the veriest novice, armed with good tackle and a cast of four flies purchased blindfold at the pier, will, after half an hour's tuition, secure a basket which might—with luck—challenge Mr. Malloch's own on the same day. Yet over any given number of days skill will tell, and the expert loch fisher will in time surely leave the novice far behind. But on a river under similar circumstances the tyro would have no chance whatever with the expert; there is an infinity of skill required in river fishing of which he has no inkling, and it would take him years to learn all that is done almost instinctively by the veteran. This is perhaps why those who begin to angle comparatively late in life are generally loch fishers.

On a stream good casting is merely the alphabet of the art; results are obtained by a deeper knowledge, the knowledge of the ways of trout and the waterways they frequent. To a natural quickness of eye and hand must be added in the angler a familiarity with running water and its denizens great and small, a familiarity that only comes with study from boyhood. To an angler of this type, one who has little more to learn in the mere manipu-

lation of tackle yet who seeks to know more of the secrets of natural life, river fishing is a pastime unsurpassed. But these are of the elect and all too few; for pleasure in the mechanical part of the sport alone the great majority were happier loch fishing.

I have limited the contrast to fly-fishing. As a matter of fact, I have grave doubts as to whether the majority of river anglers do consistently practise the art. Wherever one goes one finds the maggot, the worm, or the minnow, rife on those streams where the use of "bait" is not prohibited and sometimes even where it is. Morning, noon, or night, springtime or summer, high water or low, the fly is too often given but the most cursory trial, and it often only requires the precept and example of our neighbour to induce us also to search for our minnow trace. I, therefore, hail the Scottish dry-fly fisher as a forerunner of a better epoch.

Even on first-class salmon rivers (one hears it remarked) the old pride of purity of sport is gone, and the fly has given place largely to ridiculous prawns, leaded minnows, and even more subtle substitutes for honest lures.

To return to the personal enjoyment of the angler, I imagine that fly for fly, tackle for tackle, and lure for lure, the expert angler—but only the expert

—will find in the river especial pleasure which the loch can never give, through the endless variation it affords him for the exercise of his skill.

To those anglers who are troubled with a modest diffidence, or are unhappily (like myself) cursed with a morbid sensitiveness, the river rather than the loch offers the more certain escape from surveillance, it being easier under the circumstances to "wander" a gillie than a boatman. Most of us at times, if not all the time, have an honest dread of the critical eye of these auxiliaries, critical, doubtless, but sympathetic too, could we but bring ourselves to believe it. But any observant onlooker is apt to disconcert the angler who (crediting the stranger with supernatural skill) at once discovers in himself a depth of ignorance and crudity of method hitherto unsuspected. Devoured with shame, you endure the trial till the strain becomes unbearable and your tackle becomes hopelessly unmanageable, then round the bend you splash with a great assumption of indifference, and at last, with a sigh of relief, when out of sight, detach that confounded fly from the tail of your coat. To those of us who suffer in this way, the solitude of a moorland burn makes the angling paradise.

Whether fly-fishing does or does not afford room, as Stoddart thought it did, "for the display of

elegant motions and graceful attitudes—impersonations of earnestness and intense enthusiasm, of hope, of anxiety, of joy, of disappointment, of admiration, of pity, of content, of love, of holy feeling, and of crowning felicity"—I have searched the style of my friends in vain for evidence of some of these—whether or not it does, I say, he was probably correct in thinking it gave poor enjoyment when practised from a boat. After a little lyric upon the sport of fishing "when pursued on foot" alone or in congenial company, he concludes, "Talk no more of that monotonous and spiritless semblance of the pastime, which is followed by the affluent, among the dubs and dams of our Border river. The two modes of angling, with their attendant circumstances of place and companionship, are not for a moment to be compared." This expresses much that I have touched upon above.

But the true reason why the river, rather than the loch, has an irresistible fascination for the angler is still to seek, and I think it may be sought for with success in our literature.

Skene, in his *Celtic Scotland,* in making reference to the Scottish chronicler, John of Fordun, remarks that "he seems to break out into enthusiastic admiration of his native country." And with justice, for he quotes him to this purpose:—"It is a country

strong by nature, and difficult and toilsome of access. In some parts it towers into mountains; in others it sinks down into plains. . . . Numberless springs also well up, and burst forth from the hills and sloping ridges of the mountains, and trickling down with sweetest sound in chrystal rivulets between flowery banks, flow together through the level vales and give birth to many rivers, in which Scotia marvellously abounds beyond any other country." One recognises here at once the distinction which the angling Scot draws in his mind between "burns," "waters," and "rivers," a distinction grasped and well exemplified by that veteran angler, Mr. E. M. Tod in his work on *Wet-fly Fishing*.

But Skene might have noted that Fordun could hardly refrain from waxing lyrical when picturing his native streams, for such a passage as "trickling down with sweetest sound in chrystal rivulets between flowery banks" seems to me to be instinct with the true spirit of the lyric. It has so much of the lilt and sparkle of running water in it that one feels that the old chronicler could not think of a Scottish stream and at the same time keep control of his pen. And a greater Scot than Fordun found a similar difficulty, for Burns himself, in course of narrating the nocturnal Hallowe'en adventure of

wanton widow Leezie, surrenders himself unconditionally to the charm of running water thus:—

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night."

The verse, so far as the "plot" is concerned, is superfluous and almost irrelevant, but the poet was compelled to it when the key-note was struck for him by the chance use of the word "burn" in the preceding verse.

It is truly this charm of running water which lends so much of fascination to the sport of angling, and the more strongly one is influenced by the charm the better angler, I firmly believe, one will be—and that, too, whether in loch or stream.

CHAPTER XIII.

THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION.

If one thinks of it, there are but few books from which an intending angler may conveniently learn the rudiments of the craft. The tendency of modern writing (in angling as in other fields of effort) is towards specialisation, and we no longer have volumes published of the sweep and range of *The Angler's Companion* of Stoddart, or *A Book on Angling* of Francis Francis. Rather do we get such monographs as those of the late Mr. F. M. Halford on The Dry Fly, or treatises on semi-scientific matters connected with fish and fishing. The tyro, it seems to me, wants to get back to first principles, or at least to be given some new primer in which he may find reliably set forth the A B C of the art of angling.

For such a book as is indicated I think there is room, though it would not be easy to find the individual who could write it as it ought to be written—a book practical and yet literary. The ideal, of course, would be to collect essays of

specialists covering the whole ground and entrust them to an all-round angler of some literary ability to translate into a series of simply written chapters. In fact, what is really wanted at the present day is another new edition of that admirable little work called *How to Catch Trout,* by Three Anglers, a new edition, I mean, in which the plan might be considerably extended, and the matter appropriately expanded. Having mastered the rudiments, and while engaged in applying them in practice, the student may be advised to read that great classic, *The Practical Angler,* of Mr. W. C. Stewart, which he will do, as so many have done before him, with enthusiasm.

I have, of course, my own views as to an angler's education, and were I to undertake the task of tuition, which is far from my intention, my introductory observations would probably be on the following general lines.

After all (I would begin) books on angling go a very little way towards the making of an angler. Without contending, as some people do, that the angler is "born" and not "made," I think that a predilection for the sport begins in most cases at a much earlier age than is commonly supposed, though the opportunity for its indulgence depends largely upon what the individual's early environ-

ment may be. A pronounced fondness for angling, the true disease, has its roots in a love of nature, and it is the love of nature, I think, that is inborn in one. Every opportunity should be given to boys of gratifying their curiosity in regard to natural objects, whether animate or inanimate; but the habit should be encouraged of identifying "things seen" from reliable books of reference.

I am not sure that one would not be a better angler as a man who had studied books of natural history as a boy rather than so-called "practical" books on fishing and fishing tackle. There are few of us who have not constantly at the waterside some occasion to lament our ignorance. Hence I would urge upon every parent, however completely his own education may have been neglected in this respect, to get for his boys the best of books on birds, beasts, and fishes, with coloured plates if possible, or at least well-drawn figures. To these I would add a good work on the transformation of insects, a book on forest trees, and one on our common field plants and flowers.

It may be asked whether all this precision of knowledge is really necessary to enable a boy to catch trout. Of course it is not; but it will go a long way towards helping him as a man to catch them intelligently, and with the maximum of

pleasure. One has only to read Mr. Armistead's well-known books on trout cultivation to see what a close inter-relation subsists between various forms of animal and plant life. My immediate purpose is to show that the angler cannot begin too early to learn the facts upon which the life habits of the fish he pursues depend, for it is clear that the more he knows of their habits, the more successful he will be in his pursuit of them. "We may remark," says Stewart, "that a knowledge of the habits of the trout is the most necessary of all information to the angler. He may have the best tackle and the best flies, and be skilled in the art of throwing them lightly, but unless he knows where feeding trout are to be found, he will never achieve great success." This is the sort of knowledge that is called "an eye for water," that invaluable gift which is immediately recognised, and so often envied in others, by those who have it not. Everything else in fishing will come by practice, and those of us who are not naturally endowed with accuracy of sight and skilfulness of hand can at least make up for our deficiencies in those respects by attentive observation and the cultivation of an inexhaustible store of patience and perseverance.

These being, to my mind, the elementary principles which form the basis of an angler's

skill, one might go a little further and show how that skill can best be acquired. But, in order to do so, I shall have to beg of the expert fly-fisher to bear with me if I seem to dwell longer than is becoming on a kind of angling which he himself has (of course) long since abandoned.

I am convinced, then, that the best fly-fishers, whether on loch or stream, are those who have, when young, learned to be expert worm-fishers. As a rule, it will be found that they have the completest knowledge of the habits of trout, and are most familiar with their haunts. It might be going too far to say that they also are deftest in the management of their tackle, though many experienced anglers will think the contention not unfounded.

The reason for the worm-fisher's superiority is, I imagine, that he not only tries to circumvent trout which are feeding in the open, as the fly-fisher does, but he seeks for them in their hiding places as well. To do this without disaster to his tackle requires that every inequality of the channel which his worm traverses be present at the moment in his mind's eye. His method, in fact, compels him to read the bottom, as well as the surface, like a book; and so we find that every worm-fisher who has any pretensions to skill in his craft can deduce with astonishing accuracy the features of the bed of any

stream he may chance to fish from the variations of its surface flow. He further becomes able to tell, with a certainty which seems to be almost intuitive the precise spot in a stream where the best fish will be found to be lying. This is to have "an eye for water" in its perfection, and I do not think that that invaluable quality can be acquired in its utmost perfection from fly-fishing alone.

I would on this account aim at making a boy a proficient worm-fisher before ever I encouraged him to fish with fly at all. Such a course of instruction would have the additional merit of following the natural order of things, for a boy must use such tackle as he can most easily and cheaply come by, and that this is in most cases some kind of rod and any kind of worm hook will not be denied. He will learn for himself to make his tackle serviceable enough; my object would be to have him perfect his methods as well.

I cannot at the moment recall any angling writer who adopts this plan. Stoddart at least did not; nor did Francis Francis, nor Stewart; yet its benefit might have occurred to Stewart, for he is obliged in one passage to recommend the fly-fisher to cast in "all those places where the worm-fisher would look for sport, and which will be indicated in a subsequent chapter," thereby showing that some-

thing could be learned from worm-fishing that fly-fishing could not teach.

Worm-fishing, by a kind of convention, is anathema in polite angling circles, and on the whole very properly. It, or indeed any kind of fishing which involves the use of a living bait, will not of course for an instant bear comparison with artificial fly fishing. The artificial fly excels every other bait as a lure (first) in the delicate skill that is involved in its manufacture and use, and (second) in the high ideal of sport that its use encourages. How far the sufferings of the unfortunate bait should influence the argument is not so clear, if the sufferings of the deluded fish are not to be considered. Of the two extremes I am not sure that a healthy callousness is not preferable to a morbid sensibility.

One writer may be quoted in this connection. "Had I my will," says he, "I would never allow a trout to be caught with anything but the artificial fly, and should, under such circumstances, look upon all bait-fishing as poaching, no matter how employed." Admirable sentiment! Yet this author, in prose which might fairly claim to be poetical, proceeds, within half a dozen pages:—"Here, in delightful solitude, sauntering or scrambling on, and on, and on, and on, upwards and upwards, from wee

poolie to fern-clad cascade; casting or dropping the worm into either, or guiding it deftly under each hollow bank and past each rugged stone, pulling out a trout here and a trout there in the fair summer weather"—and so on to the conclusion—"this is to my mind the true delight of angling." Not much poetical sympathy shown here, it must be confessed, by one of the most practical anglers, to wit, Mr. Francis Francis, for the unhappy worm or the misguided trout.

Gratuitous cruelty is of course abhorrent to every right-minded person; but I would base objections to worm-fishing upon the practical questions of whether its use in any locality was or was not likely to be generally prejudicial to the sport of the majority; of whether or not the stock could stand the toll thereby levied upon it; and whether it might not too easily degenerate into a cloak for worse practices; rather than upon the abstract speculation of how far the "cruelty" involved would injure the moral character of a boy.

While I think thus on the main question, the distinction need not be lost sight of between that method of worm-fishing which the author of *The Seasons* evidently had in mind and that other method over which Francis Francis waxed lyrical and of which Stewart was the great exponent.

I can assure the learner from my own knowledge that there is not much skill involved and little real enjoyment to be found in dragging trout, or sea-trout or even salmon, from a flooded river on to a sodden bank by means of heavily leaded gut, a large hook, and a limp and unwieldy lob-worm. On the other hand, there is much that is enjoyable and more to be learned than many people think in traversing perhaps ten miles of country with a light heart, a light foot, and light worm-tackle, as Stewart did and I have often done. It requires a skill at least as great as wet-fly fishing, and an even greater knowledge of water to cover both fish and ground neatly and thoroughly. With such (I trust) rational views upon the main question, and having given (I hope) an idea of the minor distinction, one might pursue the course of tuition outlined with a clear conscience.

Suppose that our pupil is old enough to have got beyond the bent pin state of blessed innocence, and, as a young rascal of twelve summers or so, has already become familiar in his rambles with the "burns," "waters," and even the big "river" of his vicinity, he will of course be ambitious to attempt the main river at once. But there is no hurry; he will be well advised to begin first with the burns,

when, with a little experience gained, he may attack the waters and so finally reach the river.

There are two good reasons for this progression. In burns even his crude efforts will meet with some reward in sport, and river fishing is a much more dangerous game than many people are apt to suppose. By the time that a boy has mastered the difficulties of fishing burns, waters, and rivers with worm—and with success—he can hardly fail to be familiar with the ways of trout, and is already far upon the road to be an accomplished fly-fisher.

CHAPTER XIV.

TEMPERAMENT.

In angling, no less than in other sports where decision of mind and skilfulness of hand are essential to success, temperament exercises the very strongest influence. For this reason I think it may be worth while, for the benefit of those who are beginning their angling career, to devote a chapter to the subject. For older practitioners—those whose habits, good or bad, are long since formed—one might write pages in vain.

At the outset, of course, one is met with the difficulty of defining just exactly what is meant by the word "temperament." The dictionary gives but little help, and some exhausted anglers to whom I appealed for light very rudely told me to "chuck it."

It is clearly not "temper," whether sweet or sour; nor is it a happy-go-lucky indifference to the causes of effects or to the effects of causes; nor has it much to do with reason, though it may have a bearing upon some or all of these. I think (to put it in simple language) it is rather the mental state pro-

duced by the manner in which one's physical being reacts, through the nerves, to the impression produced upon one's mind by the realisation of extraneous circumstances. This is hardly so simple as I thought it was going to be, but at any rate the result is either equanimity or agitation—equilibrium or unrest. Whatever the result, it accounts almost more than anything else for the success or non-success of the angler's efforts.

One great defect of temperament is a kind of over-eagerness of the imagination; the sort of thing that forces one, in river fishing, wholly against one's better judgment, to hurry on to the next pool, to hasten round the next bend. In loch fishing the same defect tempts one time and again to leave perfectly good ground where fish (though not rising at the moment) undoubtedly are, to pull away to some far-distant spot where fancy pictures in glowing colours a better breeze and a general rise. I speak feelingly of this defect of temperament, for it is one of the worst of the many faults which prevent me from ever becoming a really good angler. Confession is no doubt good for the soul, but it will serve in this instance better as a warning to youthful anglers who will hardly credit the number of occasions on which I have been lured away to walk for miles, or pull for hours, practically without

result, or at least for no better result than would have been obtained by thoroughly exhausting fishable water nearer home. It is a defect that stern repression at the outset of one's career will alone overcome.

If this over-eagerness of imagination is at the same time coloured by a perverted spirit of emulation, then a defect that is only hurtful to oneself becomes a positive nuisance to other anglers. It is this unfortunate combination, I fancy, that causes the river fisher to hurry on up-stream in front of his rivals till his progress, as he has to overtake one angler after another in turn, is mainly occupied in walking exercise along the banks of the stream. This kind of angler, it is safe to say, never makes a good basket. The loch angler of the same type occasionally does, but only by taking an unfair advantage of other people less emulously inclined. Those first on the ground in loch fishing deserve and ought to be conceded the first of the drift.

A minor phase of this kind of temperament, which, though harmless and amusing in itself, ought to be combated, because it is conducive to bad fishing, is the belief that seizes some people in losing a good fish on loch or river that every other angler on the water at that moment is netting a heavy trout

or bringing a salmon successfully to the gaff. Most anglers over the day experience much the same average amount of misfortune, and no disaster, however disastrous, should be allowed to weigh unduly on one's spirits. On a not very hopeful day once, not long ago, when trolling in Loch Lomond, my boat, through nobody's fault, lost a big salmon. Gloomy depression, amounting almost to sullen dejection, fell upon the crew, but a very little later, under the worst possible conditions, a second salmon —a twenty-pounder—was hooked and got. "Nil desperandum" is not the least appropriate motto for the angler.

There is one thing practically certain; the angler who has no confidence in his flies will not fish with success. If he has selected them originally with the best of his judgment, or his gillie or boatman has (through his patron's ignorance of the water) selected them for him, let the angler beware how he allows a lurking doubt of their efficacy to get the better of him. It is several chances to one that the original choice was as good as any that could have been made, and no habit grows quickly to such riotous excess as the habit of changing one's flies. I know, because I suffer from the disease.

I do not say that in river fishing one ought not to change a fly at which fish do not rise for some

other at which they more probably will. In river fishing one has certain guidance, within limits, in the hatch of fly "on the water." Change in this instance, made with judgment and knowledge, is sound policy, for the hatch of fly may vary with the time of day. But aimless shifting is no advantage. In lochs where we in Scotland generally use "standard patterns" it would be difficult to advance any good reason for fishing with one cast of four "Loch Leven" flies in preference to any other similar cast of four flies. One does not as a rule, when the "butcher" is found to be taking, put four butchers on the cast, though I have known of it being done with no conspicuous success. The point I wish to emphasise is that more will probably be gained over the day by fishing with confidence with one cast than by giving to many a doubtful and shortlived trial. "Which of these shall I try now?" I despairingly asked my boatman the other day. "Pit ony o' them on," he replied, with much wisdom, "they're a' equally guid."

There is hardly any quality less in keeping with the perfect temperament for an angler than irritableness, and hardly any quality is so little relished by the angler's companion on loch or riverside. It is not very pleasant to be compelled to spend eight hours in a boat with a man whom every

trifle upsets, who resents every mishap as a personal affront. On a river, luckily, one may escape for a time; but the irritable angler cannot escape from himself, and I question very much whether he ever derives much benefit from his outing. Some excellent anglers whom I have met have been hag-ridden by this demon. It is a ludicrously painful sight to see a commonly reasonable being tear a fankled cast to shreds and stamp on the fragments because he cannot unravel it, or thrash the water with the top joint of his rod, because fish, though rising freely, will not hook; yet such actions are not unheard of. They exemplify the defective temperament in an exaggerated form, but the beginner may accept them as awful instances of what loss of control in a less degree may ultimately lead to. Rational coolness and care will be found well worth cultivation.

"The more hurry, the less speed," is a proverb that every angler should bear in mind. In no other pursuit is inconsiderate haste likely to lead to such disastrous results. But those whose temperament is of a sanguine nature invariably come to grief through this defect. I have one friend (to give an instance) who will never, in making up a new cast, give the gut time to soak before tying on his flies. In consequence, his tally of lost fish is enormous. I remember seeing him once tie on a dropper

actually with the gut dry, then cast in a likely spot, and, at the first cast, hook a salmon which immediately left him to lament the loss of both fish and hook.

Of all pastimes, angling should be the most leisurely, for in respect of every detail leading up to the capture of the quarry, the utmost circumspection is required. Not only so, but half the pleasure of angling is derived from the exercise of one's powers of observation, and the angler in a hurry seldom observes anything.

The reader, perhaps, may now think it time that the kind of temperament best suited for an angler should be indicated. That is a task I shall not attempt, nor is it necessary to face it. The temperament of each one of us differs with his character, and there is no occasion (I trust) to hope for radical change in regard to either. What is necessary, however, is that the angler should, by a process of rigorous self-examination, review the habits that his temperament leads him to indulge in. Angling is the contemplative man's recreation, and very little contemplation (of such matters as I have touched on) will suggest what ought and what ought not to be encouraged by the angler. To persevere in the right direction and to amend bad habits is the real difficulty.

CHAPTER XV.

EXAGGERATION.

MANY of the most estimable qualities are often attributed to the angler. Patience, for example, and perseverance are generally understood to be his special characteristics; the contemplative mind is believed to be peculiarly his, and the adjective "gentle" (according to some authors at least) seems to be the only one that can adequately describe his pastime. Most anglers do their best to live up to this ideal, but now and again, alas, there is a woeful falling away from grace.

There are, on the other hand, some ill-natured persons who, like Lord Byron, decline to admit any good qualities in the angler at all. They have even been known to go further, these people, and assert positively that in character, tastes, habits, and temperament the angler, *qua* angler, represents all that is socially bad and morally reprehensible. Such sweeping disparagement as this is equally undeserved, for hardly any angler of my acquaintance possesses all the bad qualities hinted at in their native crudity.

Be this as it may, it has in particular been so often alleged that veracity and angling have nothing in common with each other that now in the popular belief no angler can with justice claim to be considered a truthful man. This belief is only too thoroughly emphasised by the stock jest at his expense—"In the morning the angler goeth forth full of hope; in the evening he returneth full of whisky—and the truth is not in him." This, as put, is of course a gross libel; but it cannot be denied that grounds sometimes do exist on which a charge of untruthfulness may be based, and I think it would be well if anglers would unite in helping to remove some of them. Idle japes at our sport, like that quoted above, would then lose much of their point. As things are, students of Sir Walter will remember the old Scottish proverb he somewhere quotes—"A sooth boord is nae boord." To remove the stigma of "sooth" from this particular "boord" should be the endeavour of each one of us.

Some reader of these lines may doubtless have pleasant recollections of M'Laren's old inn at Strathyre. On one hopeless day of calm, as our boat drifted idly close to the shore near which runs the road, a friend, cycling from Callander, hailed us with the inquiry, "What sport?" Although

absolutely "clean," I yet, knowing his propensity to be a little envious of others' luck, on the spur of the moment, hailed back, "A dozen!" He pedalled on gloomily to Strathyre, and in Mrs. M'Laren's hearing threw persistent doubt upon the truth of my statement. The loyal old lady (I learned later with remorse) stood staunchly up for the absent angler:—"If he *said* a dizzen, then he *had* a dizzen, for I never kent *him* lee aboot his fish." The reproof went straight home (to me), and many a time since, when tempted to exaggerate my catch, I have tried (with varying success) to live up to the wholly unmerited certificate of character generously given to me on that occasion by my kindly old friend.

I dare say anglers are a little too much inclined to bore their friends by talking angling "shop," and the "angling story" has acquired something of a technical meaning not altogether to its credit. The American press (whose conception of humour is crass exaggeration) is, I think, partly responsible for this. For myself, I see no occasion for the smile of incredulity with which the mention of any unusual occurrence experienced by an angler is commonly met. I fancy many odd incidents happen during every fishing season; such incidents (to note a few at haphazard which have come under

my personal notice) as the capture by phantom minnow of a salmon which already had a spoon bait fixed in one jaw and a fly hook in the other; as a kelt salmon being taken on one side of Loch Tay by an angler who, having tied a piece of tarred string round its tail ere returning it to the water, recaptured the same fish on the same day on the other side of the loch; as a Loch Lomond pike being found, when gutted, to contain a half-sovereign in its stomach a day or two after such a coin had been dropped into the loch near where it was caught. My only criticism of such incidents is that as a rule, standing by themselves, they suggest no principle or useful conclusion; but that the narrator should be met with derision and incredulity is unfair. His known character for veracity will suggest whether he has "cooked" the incident along with the fish, and an angler must have himself to blame if doubt is cast upon his narrative.

If a certain picturesque fancy may be forgiven in the raconteur, there seems to be no reasonable excuse open to the man who makes a practice of exaggerating the number or weights of the fish he catches. Although the practice is fairly common, one finds difficulty in accounting for it in a satisfactory manner. Perhaps the assumption that the

fish may have lost some weight in drying may account for a marginal allowance for error being made in the angler's favour when the fish comes to be weighed; perhaps it is due to the natural preference for easily remembered figures, as, for example, when the fish which weighs one pound thirteen ounces, is classed as a two-pounder; perhaps it is vainglory; perhaps sheer lying. Thus as to weight, a laxity of statement by the angler himself may proceed from various motives.

As regards numbers, one does not clearly understand how any sportsman can (without a blush) wilfully mis-state facts and figures. To do him justice, he seldom does so; he resorts to "round numbers." Having seven fish, he casually replies to the inquirer that he has caught "about a dozen." Perhaps conceit, possibly emulation, lies at the root of the equivocation, but it hardly ever happens nowadays, even at Loch Leven, that an angler does not know within fifty per cent. or so how many trout he has caught. After all, what does it really matter if an ignoramus considers you to be a poor angler because you have a poor catch?

It is, however, when commerce enters the field of angling that one finds astounding discrepancies between the fish reported in the newspapers as caught by an angler and the fish which have actually

fallen to his rod. Numbers and weights are alike exaggerated, and the most surprising devices are often resorted to in order to make the sport to be got at some particular centre appear in a favourable light. Even estate agents have been known, by the judicious addition, omission, or suppression of some pregnant fact, to mislead a possible lessee of a river. But it is the hotelkeeper who is usually most to blame in this respect, though it is not to be understood that I consider they as a class are any more lax in their ideas than anglers are lax in theirs. Miné host's motive may be a generous one, I mean as regards enhancing the weight of "the basket," to give the angler satisfaction in having secured a good fish, or a good average of weight in his catch, but in some cases the motive may be a lurking desire to attract other sportsmen to his hotel.

The practice of exaggerating catches when it becomes known (as it invariably does sooner or later) defeats its own end, for, first, the angler innocently implicated has to stand the fire of criticism of his friends, a criticism which he dislikes and resents, and, secondly, the reputation of the hotel suffers in the long run. As an old major-general was once heard to growl (many years ago) in the smoke-room:—"If the rascal swindles the public to please me, he may take to swindling me to please himself."

LOCH FISHING.

It would benefit nobody to give particular instances of localities where angling reports have been known to be "cooked" in the past by those whose interest it is to exploit the fishing. One is willing to believe that the interest which is now generally taken in the improvement of all fishing waters prevents any great abuse of this kind from becoming common. The productive capacity of most of our popular waters is pretty accurately known, and the facts of any unusual basket got are generally inquired into by some person interested.

In my opinion, however, it is the duty of any angler who has been unwittingly implicated in deception of the kind indicated (for it is deception pure and simple) to repudiate at once any erroneous report. By doing so, he will protect his brother anglers from the risk of being misled as to the angling possibilities of a district, and I think he will do more. He will help to remove the reproach that is too often heedlessly and improperly levelled at anglers in general—that they cannot, or at least do not, tell the truth.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BACK-END.

THERE is a hard, materialistic ring about the phrase "The Back-End," which suggests nothing of the mood appropriate to the season. Its practical literalness, appealing perhaps to one of the more conspicuous of the many facets of the Scottish character, may account for its general use with us. It is slang, doubtless, as I suppose is also its American equivalent, "The Fall," but the latter expression, beside its aptness, has a somewhat unexpected euphony. Call it what you will, the autumn season is not devoid of interest for the thoughtful angler.

The fall of the year is conducive to a depression of mind and spirits. Nature seeks to cheer us with her riotous palette, but the thought of impending winter is too insistent, and the poet pitches his strains in minor key. Horace alone, *more suo,* or, in plain English, in his heathen, cynical way, found a corrective; and if he found it in "*wein, weib und gesang,*" who can blame him? Not we anglers at

least, whose father Walton gives authoritative (if at the same time decorous) warranty for distractions of a very similar kind. And some distraction is necessary; for, if to the ordinary man the season is fraught with melancholy, it suggests sheer tragedy to the angler inasmuch as the bowelless Legislature applies the closure to trout fishing on October 14, and (as regards the great majority of waters) to salmon fishing on the last day of that month. Be you trout angler or salmon fisher, the rod is not laid aside for the winter, I warrant, without a pang of regret. Who can say where, when, and by whom it will next be wielded?

Though its termination is specifically fixed by law, it is not easy to say just precisely when "back-end" fishing begins. Probably, as regards trout, it may be said to begin with the termination of the Loch Leven season, which is nowadays on September 6. Perhaps, as regards salmon and sea-trout fishing, the commencement may be put at about the time when one observes captures of sea-trout to be made in Loch Eck and of salmon in the River Earn. Tweedside "back-end" fishing is something of a specialty and extends well into winter. It begins in earnest when the nets are taken off and the great shoals of salmon, which are sometimes observed ascending the river at Norham Bridge in October,

have had time to distribute themselves over the upper reaches of the river.

But as for trout fishing in general in Scotland, regretfully as one puts past one's rod when compelled to do so, I am convinced that no trout should be taken after, at the very latest, September 30. By that time they are generally ripe for spawning; they afford but little sport when hooked, and few people will contend that they are in the best condition for the table. If waters like Loch Leven, which are in effect commercial ventures, find that "early closing" pays, then there is reason to assume that some earlier closing date than October 14 would be of general advantage to the country.

Scottish anglers as a body are impatient of restrictions, though these restrictions be conceived entirely in their own interests, but great strides have been made in the angler's education of recent years and broader and better-informed views are at last beginning to be taken of this and other matters which (I admit) require careful consideration.

For those whose fishing is but an excuse for being in the open, autumn, to my mind, is one of the most charming of seasons. When summer is at its height one is apt not to be able to distinguish the wood for the trees, or, indeed, the trees for the foliage. But let the winnowing process of a September gale

occur, and at once the vista of the stream (the angler's favourite view) opens out, and it is a vista resplendent with a wealth of colour which spring cannot emulate or summer rival. There is too much of monotony in the green of July, but in October each herb and plant, tree and shrub, strikes its own distinctive note, and there is nothing of garishness in the result, for the impalpable mist of autumn, present when the sun is highest, softens and harmonises the whole. There is no greater miracle of beauty than a rocky tree-clad promontory on a Highland loch side in October, with the sunlight shimmering on the withering bracken above and the waves lapping along the beach below. Surely only a cynic would obtrude the thought that the scene owes its beauty primarily to decay.

But there is much of life to interest the angler whose account does not solely lie with the death of fishes. Here, where I chance to write, one comes frequently into close touch with many a shy, wild creature—not so shy, though, as they were in the earlier season, perhaps because they are now less disturbed by holidaymakers.

In these last few days, sauntering about alone in a small boat (if one may saunter in a boat), I have drifted close to pheasants sunning themselves on the bramble-fringed beaches of the loch, and

blackcock strutting along in single file with the ridiculous dignity of councillors coming from some civic function. In rounding a point of rock, I surprised at close quarters a roe deer, which (to tell the truth) put himself very little about at the encounter. Two parent herons and their single offspring are becoming almost familiar friends; at least I know where they will inevitably be of an afternoon, and I fancy they begin now to look for my arrival. A dozen cormorants which people one particular rocky islet let one approach them astonishingly close ere waddling into the water, where they look remarkably alert and graceful.

It is noteworthy that the heron and cormorant have been classed respectively as "destructive" and "very destructive" to fish life by a majority of the committee of the Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland, whose report on the subject is a useful and comprehensive document, which contains some moderately expressed recommendations. The dipper, which I am glad this committee discharges without a stain on its character, one sees frequently —and often hears lustily singing—on the shingle, and of birds which less concern the angler I am most interested in a family of jays, five all told, which make, any evening towards five o'clock, a

tremendous to do, perhaps (like ourselves) about some matter of local politics. A wedge of wild geese seen flying South, doubtless (like ourselves) to some Parlement of Foules, suggests winter in the Far North; but a brood of swallows still twitters at my gable-end, and sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

In truth, the days creep in apace, and one finds it but a gloomy business in October fishing after four o'clock, though a grilse rose boldly to my dropper one evening at 5.15. He may rise with even greater assurance on some other occasion, for I did not hook him. By five it is dusk; by six o'clock it is dark; with seven o'clock comes night.

Even in broad day there is a certain absence of light. On the river it is hard for the eye to pierce known depths of the pools beneath the streamers and barriers of accumulated leaves. What light there is scarce reaches bottom at midday. On the loch one drifts over profundity in six feet of water. If there is any real cause for the melancholy of autumn, I suggest it lies in this absence of light.

For any melancholy in myself which peeps forth now it lies in the fact that on three consecutive days I have risen big salmon and have failed to hook them. It needs must that I too, like Horace,

seek distraction. *Wein, weib, und gesang* are plainly called for. To quote a more recent bard than Horace—

"Wherefore, Polly, put the kettle
On at once."

CHAPTER XVII.

DURING THE CALM.

"WELL, sir, the wind's awa' noo!" said Andra, who was my boatman for the time being.

"Aye, Andra!" I replied gloomily, "and so is that salmon!" What more I said was doubtless terse enough.

"Wheesht; never heed, sir! We ken whaur he is —and yur hook tae. Ye canna say things is lost when ye ken whur they are. We'll awa' in the noo; the breeze is bound tae come oot o' yon cloud sometime, maybe aboot three o'clock. It aye shifts roon wi' the sun. Forbye," he added, "ye needna sweer like Alick."

As some ten minutes later we lay basking in the autumn sunshine above the famous point of rock where the tragedy hinted at had just occurred, Andra meditatively remarked—

"Ye'll no hae mind o' the Injian gentleman that come here twa three year syne?"

"Mr. Currie?" I queried.

"No; I ken ye ken Currie fine. Him I mean's before your time. He'd fished here aften, he tell't me, in his young days; and the bonnie flees he had, the real auld sharny greens—jist the same's ye sent aff in the fish the noo."

"Oh, blow the fish!" I said, rather nettled, for I had a sneaking conviction that I had carelessly left undrawn the knot of the lost dropper. "Blow the fish! Let's hear the yarn."

"Aweel!" began Andra, "he had a queer temper, him—no like yours—kin' o' quiet an' easy goin'; an' him jist back from the East, tae! I mind fine it was a day like this, but thundry an' mair wind. We lunched at the Blue Rocks an' got here aboot twa, an' no a single rise a' mornin'. The licht was that bad I could see his tail flee masel', an' me sittin' at the oars. But the change began wi' the first o' the shooer, an' a flash o' lightnin' ower the tap o' Ben Dhubh pit the fish on the move. Salmon; grilse; sea-troot—big yins—a' fresh rin! The Point was fair bilin' wi' them. 'Noo,' thinks I, 'we'll hae a record basket,' an' I drew him up by the Cockit Stane. But he wudna throw a flee. 'Boatman!' says he, lookin' roon, 'whaur can we get shelter?' Thinkin' he was meanin' on the road hame when the rise was by, I tell't him, 'on the island ower yonder, below the yew trees.' 'Weel,' says

he, quite canny, 'aff ye get as quick's ye can—before the storm breaks,' says he—an' the salmon splungin', sir, splungin' roon the boat like wee troots. I wudna gang a fit at first, the island's a mile awa', ye ken; but he sune sortit me. 'If you'd been as lang's me in the East, ma man,' says he, quite ceevil, 'ye'd think mair o' yer health than a wheen fish.' So there was nae help for't, and aff we gaed. When the storm was by, back I went tae the Point as quick's ye like, thinkin' we'd maybe get the tail en' o' the rise yet, an' I drew him in by the North Draucht. At the first cast he sent his tail flee awa' in a salmon. He pit on anither. The next cast his dropper went aff in a grilse. 'Never heed,' says I, 'fire awa' wi' yin. Thur's nae time to loss.' I hadna weel spoken when a big sea-troot gaed awa' wi' the hale cast. He stertit tiein' on mair gut. 'Haud on,' says I, fair desprit, 'we'll gang ashore, an' you'll can tak' a smoke tae yersel' while I mak' up a cast for ye. Pit yur book there handy on the seat.' They were bonnie flees—I tell't ye, sir—the real auld yins, an' I soakit the gut weel, but the first cast I tested went in bits, an' so did the second. The last yin I fun' was no sae bad; it only broke at the loop; but the gut eyes o' the twa flees come awa' in my hand. They were a' the same!—an' salmon springin' in the air, sir, twa at a time. 'Hae ye no

tackle o' yur ain, boatman?' says he, quite cool. 'No a haet,' says I. 'There's a flee in yur bunnet,' says he; an' so there was—an auld bleached Burton's Fancy. 'Pit it on,' says he, 'it's maybe no sae auld's mines.' We got a wee sea-troot an' a black-neb on the auld 'Burton,' an' that was a' we got oot o' the finest rise o' fish I ever seen on the loch. I couldna speak ceevil till we got fornent the keeper's hoose gaun hame, an' then I says till him—'Whatna kin o' flees is yon tae fish the loch wi'?' 'Hoot, toot, boatman,' was a' he said, as guid humoured's ye like; 'ye maunna blame the flees, puir beasties, they hae traivel't wi' me a' ower Injia fur the last five an' twenty year.'"

"And what may be the moral of that tale?" I inquired.

"Ye'll ken that best yersel', sir," said Andra.

Perhaps I was thinking of the hero of Andra's story—possibly I wished to change the subject—but anyhow I commented on the fact that an unusual number of Englishmen had visited the loch this season.

"Deed aye!" said Andra.

"Can they fish?" I asked.

"No at first," said he; "but I sune learn them."

"But do they admit ignorance?"

"No that readily; we whiles hae words in the boat aboot it, but I can aye bring them roon."

"How do you manage?" I inquired.

"Och! I just tell them the story aboot the minister's dug—ye'll hae heard it?"

I pleaded ignorance.

"It was aboot a pet dug a minister had that he couldna learn ony tricks tae. He did a' he could, an' his wife did a' she could, an' the baith o' them agreed he was the stupidest brute they'd ever come across. It learned naethin' an' forgot a' things like ye ken wha. Aweel, yin o' they traivellin' circuses come tae the pairish an' pit up yonner at The Ruadh, an', sure enough, wan wi' a curly coat-collar an' tap-bits had a performin' dug, the same breed's the minister's. It could dae onything—jump through a bit hoop, row a fitba' up a plank, an' staun on its hauns jist like oor wee Andra. An' it wore specs an' could read a book tae—barkin' like the schule-maister wi' the hoast. 'Noo, John,' says the minister's wife, 'you'll awa' roon tae the tent an' speir at the proprietor how he learnt his dug a' they tricks, an' maybe we'll can learn poor Toby tae beg for a bit biscuit at least.' Aweel, the minister he gaed roon afore the show begun an' pit the question quite ceevil, but the man wus thrang

wi' the tent rapes at the place where the rain come in the nicht afore. 'How do I learn Kroojer they tricks?' says he. 'Well, sir, it's jist this way—to begin wi', ye must first ken mair nor the dug!' "

Being in some measure one of Andra's pupils myself, I could appreciate how his English patrons would cheerfully succumb to his delightful insolence.

But the wind was clearly gone for the day, for Andra's cloud had now developed into a thickish mist in the south.

"I'm afraid it'll be a dense fog in Glasgow," I remarked as we shoved off the boat.

"Did ye hear whit the captain o' the steamer said tae the American towerist?"

The seeming inconsequence of the question was characteristic.

"No," I said.

Andra lay on his oars.

"Ye pit me in mind o't the noo. The boat was stuck for an oor or mair at the fit o' the loch. They could hear Wullie an' his lighter baith blawin' aff steam richt ahead, but they could see naethin'. They couldna even see the bow o' thur ain boat. A' the American towerists wis lookin' at their watches tae see if they'd get back to Edinburgh in

time tae catch the Lunnon train, when yin o' them —a bonnie bit thing—went up tae the captain an' said, in yon queer voice—'I guess, cap, we kin stert raight awy. (Andra's effort was really creditable.) I kin see the sun overhead naow.' 'So can I, mem,' says the captain, quite ceevil like, 'but yon's no the way we're sailin.'"

The apt application of this "chestnut" seemed to afford Andra entire satisfaction, for, spitting on his hands finally and conclusively, he made for the other shore.

Notwithstanding an empty creel, one felt that the day had not been entirely wasted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BIG GAME.

"WHAT I like about angling," said the Enthusiast, "is, that it takes you to the very heart of Nature. Fishing quietly up a stream one gets to see all kinds of wild creatures at close quarters."

"Humph!" The interruption came from a quiet little man in the corner.

"I beg your pardon?" said the Enthusiast.

"Nothing!" said the Quiet Man.

"The wildest creature I ever encountered when fishing was a dog," said the Major, "a nasty mad brute from a hill village in Upper India. That was *my* worst experience," and he paused for encouragement to go on.

"But at home here," I put in quickly, for the Major was apt to be a trifle diffuse, "my worst experience was with midges."

"And mine's was with ma mother-in-law," said the Glasgow Man feelingly.

"But there are few *ferae naturae* left in Scotland

now," said the Professor, "even *felis catus*—the wild cat—is disputed," and he glanced at the Glasgow Man. "Let me see, the last wolf was killed in the year 1680."

"You don't count foxes?" queried the Londoner.

"A do!" swore the Hill Farmer. "A shot a vixen the year cairryin' eleeven cubs."

"Another one!" shrieked M'Nab's Parrot at the moment. M'Nab was Mine Host.

"Dawm that brute o' yours, M'Nab," said the Hill Farmer. "She gets mair sense in her every day."

"But what I mean, of course," pursued the Enthusiast, "is that you get an opportunity when fishing of studying wild animals generally—in their own haunts, you know!"

"Not always!" said the Quiet Man.

"I beg your pardon?" The Enthusiast's tone suggested annoyance.

"Not always!" repeated the Quiet Man coolly. "Not always! If you gentlemen care," he proceeded diffidently, "our young friend here puts me in mind of rather an odd experience I once had—might I?"

"Certainly!" "Of course!" "With pleasure!" we responded, willing to draw him out.

"Well!" he continued politely, "if Mr. M'Nab here will kindly—— Yes, that will be nine, M'Nab; the same again."

"Another one!" shrieked Polly, and M'Nab, as he put the cover on the cage, remarked, "There, old lady! That's your night-cap! Now, sir, you can go on; she wont disturb you."

"Well!" began the Quiet Man, "you see I'm a little grey at the temples." We smiled covertly. His hair was like the driven snow. "That was the result of the incident I refer to." He sighed, took a creditable pull at his grog, puffed for a minute, then continued. "I have all my life been a keen angler; fished most of the waters in Scotland, I think; England, Ireland, British Columbia, New Zealand even, but on the whole I prefer Scotland—you get a longer season here; but that's by the way. And scenery—but that's by the way too, I suppose." He paused with a deprecatory smile, and went on. "Well, of all counties in Scotland, I think perhaps Perthshire gives the angler the most varied hunting ground. You know Dunkeld?"

"Fine that!" said the Hill Farmer. "A got a coo there the year."

"I had been fishing the Tay," continued the narrator, "and was next due at the Earn, and it occurred to me that instead of accompanying my

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baggage on the railway round by Perth, I might just as well cycle over by Amulree and fish Loch Freuchie, a loch I'd never seen, and one which, though it lies some thousand feet above sea-level, was said to hold fine trout."

"I can testify to that," I put in.

"Yes! It's quite true," he went on. "I got seventeen, weighing about ten pounds—a good day—and it was late afternoon when I put up my tackle and left Amulree for Crieff, rod on the handle bars, some odds and ends strapped in a waterproof behind the saddle and the trout slung in a bag on my shoulder. The road, as you may know, strikes south there through an extraordinary gully in the hills, which rise two thousand feet more or less above the roadway on either hand—the Small Glen, or I should say Sma' Glen, they call it—a pass not unlike, but narrower than the Pass of Brander at Loch Awe."

"A ken the baith o' them!" said the Hill Farmer. Last Ne'erday——"

"Shut up, Saunders!" said M'Nab.

"You will know, then," continued the Quiet Man, "that the afternoon sun early leaves the road there and that towards evening, as it then was, the shadows would be already climbing up the eastern faces where the stone spouts and broken scaurs glow

with an angry red, making the glen itself seem colder and darker by contrast."

"Man, but yer richt!" said the Hill Farmer admiringly, and, indeed, the description was fairly accurate.

"It's a legendary spot, too," went on the Quiet Man, encouraged by this appreciation. "A great boulder at the roadside is one of Ossian's graves, and I would shortly be passing the site of the Roman outpost, by means of which Agricola here bridled the fierce Caledonian Picts north of the Strath of Earn. Well, I was philosophically contrasting these long by-gone days with present more peaceful times, blessing too the County Road Surveyor, and congratulating myself on the absence of motor cars, when I saw some distance ahead, and approaching me, a dark object on the road. With several slight dips and curves intervening, I made a mental note to be cautious in case I should run into a herd of Highland cattle, of which the object might prove to be the advance guard, and pursued my train of thought. The object meanwhile disappeared round a curve." Here the narrator paused, and took another long drink.

"When the thing next came into sight," he proceeded, "it was certainly no Highland stot, and the oddity of its appearance banished my ruminations

at once. It was surely a motorist in a heavy fur coat—evidently injured from the way he walked. 'No, it can't be,' I thought, and, then, before you could say 'knife,' I was off my bicycle and gazing wildly round for some place of concealment. Down went my machine on the roadside, and up I went, up the steep bank, and over a wall of loose stones like a—like a bird. The object was a bear!"

"Goad!" ejaculated the Hill Farmer.

"The huge ungainly brute, rolling his head from side to side, came lumbering along the road at a jog trot. Quaking with fear as I was, it suddenly occurred to me that the smell of my fish might betray my whereabouts, so off I tore the bag and down went my seventeen trout, plump into the middle of the road—just in time—for almost simultaneously the great brute topped the rise.

"In a state of moist terror, I surveyed my position. Things looked pretty hopeless. The slope of the hillside ran up behind me at an angle of about forty-five degrees, making flight in that direction impossible. Not a tree was on my side of the road, nor indeed were there any but scrubby alders and hazels on the other side, where the ground fell away to the river. But even if (it occurred to me) there had been a tree, for aught I knew the bear might be the better climber. I even thought of

'shamming dead,' like the man in the fable, but the chances seemed about equal that this was the wrong kind of bear. All I could do was to grip a jagged piece of whinstone in either hand, wait events, and sell my life as dearly as possible. So there I crouched, glaring through a chink in the dry-stone dyke.

"Meantime the bear, sniffing suspiciously at the bicycle, and grumbling to himself, suddenly caught sight of the bag of fish, and pounced upon it with a speed that sent cold shivers down my spine. Slavering and snuffing, he tore open the straps, then sat down and deliberately munched up the whole ten pounds of trout. There was still light enough to see the scales flash on his paws as he wiped his mouth. I shivered to think that the fate of the seventeen trout might well be mine within the next few minutes—and I living! I think I must have momentarily lost consciousness and fallen forwards against the wall, for my forehead was bruised and blood was flowing down my face when I was able to see distinctly again. I breathed more freely. The bear was gone from the roadway, but a crashing and rustling amongst the hazels showed he was making for the river. His meal had clearly made him thirsty, so, when silence suggested he had begun to drink, I leaped the dyke, mounted my bicycle,

and, not daring to risk a spill by looking round, pedalled for Crieff for dear life."

He turned to the Enthusiast: "Wild creatures, my friend, *not* in their own haunts, don't amuse me!

"Well!" he went on, "so engrossed was I with what lay behind that, within a mile or so of Gilmerton, I almost collided with a dog-cart which came furiously round a corner. We both pulled up sharply. The driver was a red-haired lad with a vacant expression. The passenger was of a different type. In an old cloth cap and without a collar, in evening dress and top-boots, in an Astrachan, fur-lined coat, he looked, with his heavy bloated face, what he actually was—a disreputable travelling showman. I summarised the situation while we stared at each other, I at his unique costume, he at my gory face. At last he ejaculated in gutteral English, 'Haf you seen a bear?' Glad to inflict upon the rascal something of what I had myself suffered, I said I had; that it had attacked and nearly killed me; that I had seen it tear to pieces and devour the flesh of seventeen innocent creatures; that every human being in the Sma' Glen had fled, and that I was the sole survivor. 'Gott in himmel!' he roared; 'bot he vas ein *baby* bear!'"

. . . . . .

When some few minutes later M'Nab was depositing the night's drawings in the safe, preparatory to locking up, I said, "By the way, M'Nab, who is the quiet little man who met the bear? I seem to know his face."

"Didn't you recognise him?" M'Nab replied. "It's Sir Stanley Livingstone, the great explorer and big game hunter."

"Another one!" came in a sleepy voice from the Parrot's cage.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PLEA FOR THE LOCH.

WHILE my sympathies—like those of most anglers—are most keenly enlisted by river fishing, I would not like it to be supposed that I have no love for loch fishing, nor yet that I subscribe to the belief, sometimes expressed, that there is little skill in loch fishing. On the contrary, my belief is that in many respects most anglers are woefully ignorant of much concerning lochs and their inhabitants that it would be greatly to their advantage to know, and the following observations suggest some directions in which I think study might fruitfully be applied.

One sometimes hears it stated that angling in a loch is not unlike, and amounts to very much the same thing in practice as angling in the quiet pool of a river. I do not know which of "the authorities" first gave currency to the statement, but I have never been able to convince myself of the truth of it.

A pool of any river, however big and sluggish and quiet it may be, is always structurally a river-

pool, and a loch, however large or small it may be, and whether it lies in the direct channel of a river or not, is always structurally a loch. Doubtless the line of demarcation is often fine, as, for instance, where a river finds entry to a loch through preliminary lochans, or where again, on emerging from the loch, it pauses awhile in reed-fringed pools ere finally deciding upon pursuing its further progress down the valley. There need seldom be any difficulty in making a distinction. In cases of doubt, the matter may very well be brought to an issue by eliminating in fancy the river from the scene. With its disappearance the river-pool, if it is a river-pool, will be seen to have been eliminated also, but the loch, if it is a loch, will remain, and will be seen to have preserved its identity very much unchanged. In truth the difference between the two is fundamental, and geological structure lies at the root of it.

But if there be, as I think there is, an essential difference in character between the geological features of a loch and of a stream, there is no less a difference between the characteristics of the waters of each, and it is not a difference that is confined wholly to questions of current and stagnancy, or winds and calms, though these are doubtless factors of outstanding importance. Many obscure questions

of temperature are also involved—and it may well be that temperature accounts for some lochs being "free-rising" lochs and for certain others being the "dourest" of their kind. Weight must also be allowed to such further questions as the relative kind and quantity of matter held in suspension and the comparative aeration of the water. These considerations will suggest to the thoughtful reader that there may, and indeed must, be many abstruse differences between river-pool and loch which affect the habits of the fish in each respectively and consequently must affect the nature of the angler's plans for capturing the fish.

It necessarily follows, too, that there are considerable differences, both in kind and degree, between the subaqueous growths of loch and stream, and these differences must naturally affect the various living organisms which consequently throng the waters—organisms upon which all fish life depends. Mr. H. T. Sheringham, in a chapter contributed to the late Mr. F. M. Halford's last work, *The Dry-Fly Man's Handbook,* has something to say on this point. "The thing that has most impressed me," he writes, "with regard to dry-fly fishing at Blagdon (and I presume this would to some extent apply to other large lakes also) is that the angler is confronted with a need for

learning a quite new fisherman's entomology." Whether at Blagdon or elsewhere Mr. Sheringham is so far right that the river fisher, when he takes to fly-fishing on a loch, must be prepared to extend widely his entomological knowledge.

The merely mechanical aspect of things, as involving differences in the angler's outfit and appliances needs, finally, only bare mention to show that the fishing of a river-pool is a very different thing from the fishing of any loch. The whole matter may be summarised at once by stating that the fishing of lochs, as contrasted with the fishing of rivers, involves an entirely separate and distinct set of problems. These it is necessary for any person to solve who aims at being an expert loch fisher as well as a good river fisher.

To refer to another matter, one has only to glance at the introductory remarks in Chapter X. of *The Practical Angler* to see that Stewart, great angler as he was, had but the poorest opinion of loch fishing. Discoursing on the text that "Angling in lochs is not held in such estimation as angling in running water," he proceeds by way of argument and illustration to the conclusion that "all these things render loch fishing a less difficult, and consequently less interesting, branch of angling than fishing in our southern streams," or—I suppose he might just

as readily have written—any of our streams. As a kind of fiddling pastime for a weakling, or as an excuse for visiting picturesque localities, he admitted that loch fishing might have its advantages, and of course there was always the inducement that you might sometimes catch a big 'un; but as a serious pursuit he did not apparently rank the claims of loch fishing very highly.

Now strictures such as these are by no means out of date even now, for there is a very general belief amongst anglers whose experience, like Stewart's, has been gained for the most part on the riverside, that loch fishing, in comparison with river fishing, is "easy" work. It may be so—I do not hesitate to admit that it is so—but how much easier it is I am not prepared to say. It is at any rate "difficult" enough for me.

As regards its being less fatiguing I have my doubts. Loch fishing of course gives the lazy angler a glorious opportunity for idling, but one may idle away profitable hours by the riverside too, and, like Francis Francis, "I hate a lazy fisherman"—when he is fishing. The angler who is keen to make a good basket—even at Loch Leven—will find that he has his day's work cut out for him, and a long and hard day's work he will probably find it to be—particularly if a "cup" is in prospect.

Just one more observation. One often hears it argued—and argued, too, with greater heat than the importance of the subject seems to warrant—"that the pleasure of a day's fishing on the loch," as I have put the proposition in a former chapter, "will not bear comparison for an instant with the enjoyment to be derived from a day's fishing on a stream." The question is no doubt arguable, though I believe that, if the Referendum were a practicable policy in vogue amongst anglers, the stream would have it. But, in any case, however answered, the question seems to be a bootless one after all, for your enthusiast will seize upon any chance of fishing that is open to him, and he will not, for example, decline to fish in Loch Eck simply because he cannot get fishing in the River Echaig. In other words, he will make the most of his opportunities, and enjoy his sport none the less because at the moment he cannot cast his fly in running water.

If there is anything of practical value to be found in the foregoing remarks, I think it lies in the suggestion that many of us in Scotland are too apt to face the fishing of lochs and streams with a light-hearted disregard for the essential differences that lie between them. Probably better results could be obtained, especially in lochs, by a more accurate

study of the conditions of life in them, and at any rate I am sure of this that such study, like virtue, would in time prove to be a sufficient reward in itself.

CHAPTER XX.

STATUTORY CRUELTY.

Reference having been made elsewhere in this volume to that "cruelty" which is inseparably connected with the sport of angling, I think it is not out of place to examine more particularly here a charge which is sometimes levelled against the gentle angler.

Although the best angling and legal opinion is by no means unanimous on the point, there seems to be reason for the belief that the terms of the Protection of Animals Act, passed for England and Scotland respectively in 1911 and 1912, are sweeping enough to bring some of the existing methods of angling within the purview of the law courts.

From the beginning of things down to the present day it has been the practice of the fisherman to use one or other of the smaller living creatures as a lure to tempt the appetite or provoke the predatory instincts of the greater fish he desires to capture. One may instance the affixing of a living frog to

a hook as a bait for pike, and the baiting of special tackle with live dace to lure both pike and perch, as methods still existing and perhaps most common in England; the transfixing of a live may-fly, or stone-fly, or its larva the "creeper," with a small hook to catch trout, as a method now common in Scotland; a similar use of the may-fly, daddy-long-legs, and fern-beetle for "dapping," as a method common to the Irish lakes; and the threading of living worms, grubs, and maggots upon hooks for capturing many kinds of fish as a method common everywhere. All these are examples of what is known as live-baiting, using the technical term in its widest acceptation. The point to be considered by the public (and it is a point which has long been weighed by conscientious anglers) is, whether such uses of all or any of the creatures mentioned is "cruelty"—cruelty, that is, of such a kind as to warrant interference by the State on the ground of its being *contra bonos mores*.

Most practical and healthy-minded people decline to let their thoughts dwell too closely upon the possible sufferings of those members of the lower orders of creation which are sacrificed to meet human wants. They sacrifice them if they find it necessary or profitable to do so, and that is an end of it. And perhaps this degree of callousness—if it be callous-

ness—is better suited to a workaday world than a super-sensitiveness which, if carried to excess, would make human existence intolerable.

It is questionable if any good purpose would be served by an attempt to analyse in detail the sufferings of a worm, a creeper, a may-fly, a dace, or even a frog when transfixed by a hook. A minute description of the operation of transfixing would be sufficiently revolting to most well constituted minds from an unconscious tendency on the reader's part to refer the victim's sensations to those which he himself would undoubtedly feel if he were to be so victimised. A writer of genius, by describing at length the lingering death of a lug-worm or the futile fears of a herring in face of impending doom, might quite conceivably harrow our souls, yet long-line fishing for haddock and the netting of herring would still remain reputable employments. And if the lug-worm, why not also the lob-worm? Cruelty may at once be conceded, but I am inclined to think that it is the simple-minded elaboration of detail in Izaak Walton's directions for live-baiting that lays him open to a charge of "cold-blooded" cruelty in the pursuit of his sport.

It is worth while showing the Master at his worst, thus—

"First, for your live-bait. Of fish, a roach or dace is, I think, best and most tempting (and a perch is the longest lived on a hook); and having cut off his fin on his back, which may be done without hurting him, you must take your knife, which cannot be too sharp, and cut or make an incision, or such a scar, as you may put the arming-wire of your hook into it, with as little bruising or hurting the fish as art and diligence will enable you to do; and so carrying your arming-wire along his back, into or near the tail of your fish, between the skin and the body of it, draw out that wire or arming of your hook at another scar near to his tail: then tie him about it with thread, but no harder than of necessity to prevent hurting the fish; and the better to avoid hurting the fish, some have a kind of probe to open the way, for the more easy entrance and passage of your wire or arming; but as for these, time and a little experience will teach you better than I can by words."

So much for Walton's treatment of a small fish. His method of baiting with a living frog is hardly less elaborately stated:—

"Put your hook into his mouth, which you may easily do from the middle of April till August;

and then the frog's mouth grows up, and he continues so for at least six months without eating, but is sustained none but He whose name is Wonderful knows how: I say, put your hook, I mean the arming-wire, through his mouth and out at his gills; and then with a fine needle and silk sew the upper part of his leg, with only one stitch, to the arming-wire of your hook; or tie the frog's leg above the upper joint, to the arming-wire; and, in so doing, use him as though you loved him, that is, harm him as little as you may possibly, that he may live the longer."

It must be confessed that one can hardly read either of the foregoing passages, published in 1653, without a shudder. The leisurely precision of the diction savours too strongly of the operating theatre for most people. Yet it is possible that many self-respecting pike fishers in England perform much the same kind of operation in a trice without a pang at the present day. It is not my wish or intention to defend such practices, but probably if Walton had simply written of the dace or frog, "Put the hook lightly through its skin, or in its mouth, and let it swim about," we should have heard nothing of Lord Byron's scathing denunciation.

Most people, and all anglers, know the reference made to angling by Lord Byron in "Don Juan":—

"And angling, too, that solitary vice,
Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says;
The quaint, old, cruel, coxcomb, in his gullet
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it."

His prose comment upon this passage, made in the "Notes," is, however, perhaps not so well known. Byron remarks:—

"It would have taught him humanity at least. This sentimental savage, whom it is a mode to quote (amongst the novelists) to show their sympathy for innocent sports and old songs, teaches how to sew up frogs, and break their legs by way of experiment, in addition to the art of angling, the cruelest, the coldest, and the stupidest of pretended sports. They may talk about the beauties of nature, but the angler merely thinks of his dish of fish; he has no leisure to take his eyes from off the streams, and a single *bite* is worth to him more than all the scenery around. Besides, some fish bite best on a rainy day. The whale, the shark, and the tunny fishery have somewhat of noble and perilous in them; even net fishing, trawling, etc., are more humane and useful. But angling!—— No angler can be a good man."

This is hard measure for us who—albeit with frailties enough—endeavour to pursue without offence our time-honoured pastime.

Against the kind of "humanity" inculcated by "Don Juan" and its author may be placed this one verse whose metre at least (for he employed it freely) Lord Byron could hardly cavil at:—

"Let me live harmlessly; and near the brink
Of Trent or Avon have a dwelling-place,
Where I may see my quill or cork down sink
With eager bite of perch, or bleak, or dace;
And on the world and my Creator think:
Whilst some men strive ill-gotten goods t'embrace,
And others spend their time in base excess
Of wine, or worse, in war and wantonness."

It is the first verse of a poem quoted in *The Compleat Angler* as "the wish of another angler, and the commendation of his happy life, which he also sings in verse—viz., Jo. Davors, Esq." It could hardly be bettered as a prophetic anticipatory refutation by Walton of the aspersions which were to be cast upon him some two hundred years later by the noble poet. Indeed, if the suggestion is not too far-fetched, the speculation might also be hazarded that Byron, reading it, had been stung to his tirade by a consciousness of the personal application of the verse.

How far the moral character of Walton's disciples has been deteriorated through the centuries by the evil practice of live-baiting is doubtless incalculable. The character of Walton himself requires no defence. He stands self-revealed in his book as "a worthy man"—the kind of man Chaucer so sympathetically sketched:—

> "And though that he was worthy, he was wys,
> And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
> He nevere yit no vileinye ne sayde
> In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
> He was a verray perfight gentil knight."

Almost precisely a hundred years after Walton wrote, and about a hundred years prior to Byron's denunciation of him, Hogarth executed a series of prints called "The Four Stages of Cruelty." In these, as everybody knows, is set forth the awful and horrible career of one, Thomas Nero. I only refer to these prints here because they remind me of an attitude towards sport of every kind not uncommon with certain people.

In the annotation of the prints in question (by the Rev. J. Trusler and E. F. Roberts) the text is taken—

> "The poorest beetle that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance, feels a pang as great
> As when a giant dies."

and the commentary proceeds thus:—

"This pathetic lesson of humanity is given by the poet of nature. Aiming at the same end by different means, our benevolent artist here steps forth as the instructor of youth, the friend to mercy, and advocate of the brute creation.

"In the prints before us an obdurate boy begins his career of cruelty by tormenting animals; repeated acts of barbarity sear his heart; he commits a deliberate murder; and concludes in an ignominious death. These gradations are natural. I had almost said inevitable; and that parent who discovers the germ of barbarity in the mind of a child, and does not use every effort to exterminate the noxious weed, is an accessory to the evils which spring from its baneful growth. To check these malign propensities becomes more necessary from the general tendency of our amusements. Most of our rural and even infantine sports are savage and ferocious. They arise from the terror, misery, or death of helpless animals. A child in the nursery is taught to impale butterflies and cockchafers. The school boy's proud delight is clambering a tree—

'To rob the poor bird of its young.'

"Grown a gentle angler, he snares a scaly fry, and scatters leaden death among the feathered tenants of the air; ripened to manhood, he becomes a mighty hunter, is enamoured of the chase, and crimsons his spurs in the sides of a generous courser, whose wind he breaks in the pursuit of an inoffensive deer or timid hare."

I am sorry not to be able to fix the date of this earnest protest against all field sports. But it represents fairly enough the sort of nonsense that is occasionally heard to-day, a type of nonsense, however, which contains just enough similitude of truth to cause trouble and annoyance to a great many inoffensive people. While resenting the imputation of cruelty, most sportsmen will disdain to notice such attacks as these; but such attacks, if often enough repeated, eventuate in Acts of Parliament, and it is therefore perhaps just as well that an organisation has been formed in England to see that intemperate zeal is not permitted to inflict legal injustice upon the angler.

James Thomson, the poet of "The Seasons," had something to say of fishing, and of live-baiting, for he urges the reader to seize the opportunity afforded by a clearing river thus:—

"The well-dissembled fly,
The rod fine-tapering with elastic spring,
Snatched from the hoary steed the floating line,
And all thy slender watery stores, prepare.
But let not on thy hook the tortured worm,
Convulsive, twist in agonising folds;
Which, by rapacious hunger swallowed deep,
Gives, as you tear it from the bleeding breast
Of the weak, helpless, uncomplaining wretch,
Harsh pain and horror to the tender hand."

Manfully as Thomson here struggles to enlist our sympathies on behalf of the unfortunate worm, he only succeeds in convincing us that it is his own sensitiveness he is afraid of wounding. The more so that he has but scanty sympathy with the sensations which a hooked fish may be imagined to suffer, and as in fact he does imagine it to suffer, for—

"With yielding hand,
That feels him still, yet to his furious course
Gives way, you, now retiring, following now,
Across the stream, exhaust his idle rage;
Till, floating broad upon his breathless side,
And to his fate abandoned, to the shore
You gaily drag your unresisting prize."

That inadvertent little word "gaily" tends to raise one's doubts as to the sincerity of the poet when

recording the sufferings of the poor dumb worm while he is apparently wholly oblivious or at least careless of the sufferings of the poor dumb fish.

"Thus pass the temperate hours,"

he concludes, and the truth is that, worm or no worm, Thomson is a convinced disciple of the school of Walton, and is, after all, but little in sympathy with the sympathetic Byron.

The fact is that the poets help us very little in a matter which resolves itself into a question of plain common sense. No mortal man can possibly say how much of pain or discomfort is felt or experienced by a maggot, grub, or worm; a fern beetle, daddy-long-legs, or may-fly; a "creeper" or a stone-fly; a dace, or even a frog when transfixed by a hook, and to cite the poetic pangs of a beetle as evidence in this matter is pure futility. It is not suggested for a moment that these creatures, one and all of them, do not suffer, but one has no means of estimating the extent of their suffering. The extraordinary mutilations, for example, that fish bear without any apparent discomfort or alteration in their habits, are well known to every person who has any intimate knowledge of them. But to inflict mutilations upon defenceless creatures, or even

to witness them, is repugnant to all sensitive people, as it was (in theory) to Thomson, and that is why many anglers, who can face the struggles of the fish with equanimity, cannot reconcile themselves to the use of live-bait; some drawing the line at may-flies, some at worms, and most at frogs and dace.

But whatever cruelty is involved in the sport of angling—conceding the fact that there is to a certain extent some unavoidable cruelty—is not cruelty of a kind, it may fairly be argued, to exercise a degrading or deteriorating effect upon public manners, however detrimental it may be to any individual. One hopes, therefore, that the meritorious officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a body pledged apparently—if one may judge from the dicta of members pronounced at divers times—to stop all sport which involves the death of the quarry, will not officiously endeavour, through the instrumentality of ill-considered Acts of Parliament, to harass devotees of the gentle art in spite of the modicum of suffering the pursuit entails upon some of the humbler members of the animal kingdom.

There is a rational line which may be drawn, at any given period of the world's history, between maudlin sentimentality on the one hand and callous

cruelty on the other which cannot be laid down in any Act of Parliament. One would say that with respect to fish and fishing, the line would be peculiarly difficult to draw. The good sense and right feeling of anglers themselves may be trusted, I think, to draw the line at the right place without compulsion.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHY?

Why should one angle? To begin a chapter thus savours not a little of the method of elucidating angling mysteries employed by the late Mr. W. Earl Hodgson, who had the happy art of posing the reader with some question extremely difficult to answer, while he passed on light-heartedly to other matters. If I do not here and now choose categorically to answer the question I have put above, it is because I would ask the reader rather to seek an answer for himself in the foregoing pages. If he chances on one which seems in any way satisfactory, I shall be quite well pleased.

After all, the angling fraternity—a horrid phrase—forms but a small portion, even in Scotland, of the general population of the country. If one thinks of it, the proportion of those who follow the sport of angling as their main pastime—as so many follow golf—is infinitesimal. It was only the other day, indeed, that the chief leading article of *The Field*

seriously considered whether there had not in fact of recent years been an actual diminution in the numbers of those who find their recreation in fishing.

The fact, if it is a fact, may be gladly, if sceptically, noted by those who, on every Saturday in April, are accustomed to fish the upper waters of the Clyde; by those who, on any day in May, find other twenty (or so) boats already fishing the Endrick Bank when their craft arrives; and by those who learn in response to their telegrem that not a single boat is available for them on Loch Leven on any afternoon in June. But, for my part, I think it is not a desirable thing that the love of angling should be allowed to die out amongst the people of Scotland.

If one is not prepared to admit that the ranks of anglers (like the ranks of the Territorial Force) have been numerically thinned of late years, one can at least suggest some plausible enough reasons why their numbers should not have latterly increased proportionately with the growth of the population, in spite of the greater facilities of modern travel.

For one thing, I doubt if there is to-day as much fishable water available to the public as there was even a dozen years ago. Pollution has wiped out fishing almost wholly in many of our streams, but,

pollution apart, by fishable water I mean such lochs and streams as any chance comer may fish in, either without let or hindrance, or by payment easily and with not too much formality made to some recipient of an amount that penury itself would consider reasonable.

The same tale is told, however, in every district. "The proprietor does not now give permission to fish his water"; or, "The water is now in the hands of an angling club"; or, yet again, "There is now an Association which puts a heavy tax on the visitor"—facts like these face the intending angler in every district, and it is no great wonder if those who fain would be eager disciples of Izaak Walton turn their thoughts of recreation in other directions.

The man of wealthy leisure, whose angling is but an incident in the round of more strenuous enjoyments, has no need to concern himself regarding the future; his interests, which economically run along exclusive lines, may even be bettered by the trend of things. Nor need the man of means—the average representative of the great middle class—care overmuch; he will join a club that has a water, or will with his friends form such a club. But the man of limited resources has a poor chance of ever indulging freely whatever of delight in

fishing may lie dormant in him, and for the most part the poor man does not fish at all.

In my opinion, often publicly expressed, the waters of this kingdom ought to be made more cheaply and easily accessible to prospective anglers by some system which will ensure—as stringently and absolutely as can be accomplished—that the liberty conferred does not degenerate into licence.

If restricted opportunity (to pursue *The Field's* speculation) thus counts as an influence adverse to the spread of angling, I think that some weight also may be allowed to the distracting influence of competing amusements. Man's time is but brief here below, and briefer still his time for play. Now I doubt if there is anywhere in the world so great a variety of sports and pastimes as is open to the population which has its twin centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow. And the variety is in no strict sense confined to one class alone, but is largely available throughout and to the different strata of the community. It stands to reason therefore that no one branch of sport alone can have other than a select few wholly devoted to it. If, then, more people angle, probably most of these angle less.

But it is a mechanical age in sport as in business, and the motor car and bicycle have encouraged a

lust for speed of movement which makes a wide appeal. Those who fall victims view with a misplaced pity the pursuits of the man who is content to while away golden hours by the riverside.

There is, too, a growing disposition in the populace to find distraction in the excitement of gregarious pleasures—perhaps the inevitable outcome of gregarious toil—and football enclosures and picture palaces claim their own. Yet it is not the angler and his friends who make the towns hideous with raucous merriment, nor is it they who devastate the country-side on public holidays. The picture house, however instructive its films may be, is a poor substitute for Nature as a teacher.

It has been my privilege to attend the annual social gatherings of angling clubs whose membership is comprised solely of working men. In one such club, in a district where the number of anglers may perhaps be estimated at ·6 per cent. of a total population of 50,000, I have found (if I may say so without offence) the standard of intelligence and sobriety, of courtesy and good humour, to rank extremely high. In another such club, in a colliery district, where, too, I have been hospitably entertained, I make bold to say that the ablest miners, as well as the most courteous men, were amongst

those who wielded the rod. Beyond question, if the company a man keeps moulds his character and disposition, the man who keeps closest company with her in her sweetest moods can hardly fail to reflect in his own life and conduct something of the joy and dignity of Dame Nature herself.

It is, then, as a corrective to much that is harsh and material in our daily life that angling has a value all its own, and if the reader cares to do so he may accept this assurance (which after all, however, may only be dictated by personal preference) as an answer to the query, "Why should one angle?"

"They little ken," said a young journeyman joiner to me recently, whose mates occasionally chaffed him about non-success in his chosen pursuit, "They little ken what they're missing." I admit this lad was country-bred, with a love for angling in his bones, but if he found his week-end holiday spent on the river a valuable asset in his workaday life, how much more would such prove a tonic to a son of the city? I had the pleasure once of hearing the tersely expressed view of a town operative regarding a day spent by him for the first time on a western stream. I had asked him to report how he had got on, and he duly reported in person.

"Did you catch anything?" I asked, for the weather had been anything but favourable for a first essay.

"No a haet," he replied.

"But I hope you had a pleasant day?" I queried. "It's a bonnie stream."

"Man, d'ye ken," was his enthusiastic response, "it was jist like Heeven."

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